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**Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) Library Catalogue:
Evaluating the Society's Digital Archive Project**

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ABSTRACT

The Muhiyyidin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) based in Oxford, England, took an initiative to collect Ibn 'Arabi's rare works and manuscripts through several digitisation projects to preserve the collections for future generations; and at a later stage the MIAS digital archive was formed to facilitate online access and encourage collaborative research and raise the profile of the Society. Initially, a thorough literature review was conducted so that to understand the discipline of archive science and its digital counterpart, and get a comprehensive view of the subject.

The aim of the research is to evaluate the MIAS digital archive in terms of quality of descriptive information, design, and user accessibility. A survey research method was used in the research and hence five London-based archivists have been interviewed from several institutions and they were from Senate House Library, the Wellcome Trust, the Royal Asiatic Society, the London Zoological Society Library, the British Library Qatar Foundation partnership, and the British Library Labs. The interviews were conducted to support the understanding of the archival profession through the archivists' opinions, experiences, practices and their understanding of user related issues. In addition to the interviews, the research has been augmented by an online questionnaire and was deployed in particular to target members of the MIAS digital archive, but also the opinion of non-members was welcomed. The collected data was from the user-experience in relation to the effectiveness, ease of accessibility and usability of the digital archive. The questionnaire was distributed on the Society's website and other social media sites.

In conclusion, it was apparent the MIAS Society did not explore the use of social media and online technologies to raise the profile of the Society, and therefore it put in recommendations to them that in order to expand their digital archives, they will need to acquire such technologies. The Society also did not follow the general international archival description which is the framework for archival record guidelines. According to the respondents, the current MIAS user interface is effective but nevertheless some recommendations were put forward in relation to other aspects that affect the usability of online digital archives.

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God bless everyone

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PART ONE

1 INTRODUCTION

Archives are crucial cornerstones in the life of scholarly research and for the preservation of human heritage. They have gained strong academic foundation and became a standalone science with its theories and practices. There are several functions of archives management that run from the appraisal process to acquisition, use and finally, digitisation and online accessibility (Brown C. , 2014, p. 63). In addition, the advent of web technologies enhanced archival studies and as a result, became more popular within academic institutions.

Digital archiving therefore is the offshoot of traditional archives and it is considered as a facility within the archival profession according to Nathan, D. (2012, p. 255), and thus digital archiving has become an essential tool to the research community. When we say digital it does not only mean the electronic preservation of rare collections and is not only the act of transforming paper materials into digital format, but it is also the act of ensuring the endurance of access to manuscripts or other valuable materials.

As a consequence, the role of archivists in the 21st century has developed from the traditional preservation of collections to incorporate knowledge of digitisation and digital archiving for and together help disseminate information about the archival holdings (Millar, 2017, p. 169). The preservation of rare manuscripts and other valuable collections for future generations is not the only thing that archivists are concerned about, but rather they are keen to provide a wide access to archival collections and raise the profile of their institutional archives. In the past, archive collections can only be accessed through reading rooms and by prior permission, but due to the development in web technologies they offered archival institutions the opportunity to create virtual reading rooms by making their 'unique' materials available online (Bountouri, 2017, p. 29). More and more traditional UK archives, libraries and special-collection libraries worldwide have been digitising their special collections of rare manuscripts including the Vatican Library in Italy and El Escorial Library in Spain. Therefore, one can express a pleasure in this verily a decade-old strategy of digitisation phenomenon to help protect rare collections as well as facilitate remote accessibility to such archival collections. Middle East libraries are not far behind to protect rare manuscripts and antiquities in form of objects and artefacts, especially during the upheaval and unrest situation that the region is going through in the present time. One initiative that is worth noting, is the one which was carried out by Antiquities Coalition¹ under the name of the Digital Library of the Middle East which began in 2016 to protect artefacts by digitising and creating records accessible via a website, <https://dlme.clir.org/>. Another independent initiative was the one that was taken by the Muhiyyidin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) in Oxford to establish a digital archive for the rare materials that have been collected for more than a decade and making them available online, which this research is concerned about.

¹ <https://theantiquitiescoalition.org>, a call to bring together individuals, institutions, and governments in to take a strong action to safeguard human heritage.

The construction of digital archives require knowledge of several elements like web technologies and knowledge of social media such as wiki, blogs and Twitter, archival descriptive information standards and user studies to enable an efficient and effective user-friendly design of digital archives. Although these elements plus others are essential, but there are some issues in relation to the user-digital archive experience because, archival institutions lack comprehensive knowledge of descriptive standards and ineffective user evaluation and feedback processes (Zhou & Huang, 2013), and according to Michalko (2015) resulting record descriptions have not been well researched. Therefore, the reason behind evaluating MIAS digital archive is to know whether or not the archive is usable by individual scholars. Part of the evaluating process is to determine the quality of the descriptive information and the supplement of digital resources within the online catalogue. These two approaches are extremely important to digital archives.

Furthermore, archival institutions should take an advantage of social media technologies and technological innovations to enrich their activities and engage with users and communities. Through digital archiving, archives can facilitate participation among users, and provide a linkage between the two approaches previously mentioned (Roued-Cunliffe & Copeland, 2017). User online participation is thus paramount to the prosperity of archives; it is something that does not need training and amateur users can contribute to the scholarly communication of archivists. For instance, and in the words of Roued-Cunliffe & Copeland (2017), “the archive is an institution built around amateur initiative”, and this is especially the case in the digital age. Although information in the digital age has bridged the gap between the two approaches, but according to Walton (2017), the profession is still operating outside the user-centred when it comes to tools and the presentation of digital materials.

As for online record descriptive information, an important element of any digital archive is the descriptive metadata and its technical characteristic, and the support it provides to the intellectual management of electronic records. Both types comprise of several elements that help to interpret and identify digital materials such as images. These metadata types also help users to discover resources through techniques such as searching and browsing (Brown, 2013 p. 156, Spiteri, 2016 p. 24). Metadata elements facilitate cross-collection and cross-institution searching (Hider, 2012, p. 131). This is not a new for archivists, because they create record finding aids based on internationally recognised descriptive (conceptual) standards such as the General International Standard Archival Description ISAD(G) and the Encoded Archival Description (EAD). Descriptive tools such as EAD provide a consistent multi- description by encoding traditional archival finding aids for electronic exchange and presentation (Millar, 2017, p. 233). This topic will be covered in Part 3.

Since 1981, the MIAS embarked on collecting rare works and manuscripts related to Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240 A.C.), who had written over 300 books and treatises. The Society acquisition of manuscripts did not stop at the digitisation for preservation purpose, but also designed an online catalogue or digital archive to facilitate accessibility². The Society aims to make the online archive catalogue to be a large resource for Ibn ‘Arabi’s work and the main supply for his authentic work and authors of his school. The archive currently holds 1,250 vital manuscripts and hoping to integrate that with secondary resources of the online library catalogue that eventually would hold the MIAS own literature and publications. The Society hopes through the digital archive to help provide the

² MIAS: <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/archive.html#recent>

basis for critical editions and translation within this field. And to encourage users of the archive to participate in scholarly communications (Sauer, 2009), and contribute towards the verification of the digitised manuscripts.

This project followed the survey research method where an expanded review of the literature was undertaken to acquire a wider understanding of archive science including digital archives. The expanded literature review helped to formulate the research questions as well as relevant interview questions on the other hand. More questions were articulated for use on the online questionnaire. The respective data collection techniques has deepened the understanding of the topic and the issues that surround usability, user-experience and digital archives from the viewpoint of both, the user perspective and the archivist's professional experience. The data were then analysed qualitatively looking for patterns and trends that later used for a brief comparative analysis with MIAS digital archive. The final part was presented in form of recommendations put forward, which will be novel to the MIAS Society.

1.1 AIMS, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND DEFINITION

1.1.1 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to evaluate the Muhiyydin 'Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) online archive project with its two parts, on-line archive catalogue of the digitised manuscripts, and on-line catalogue database of printed works and the Society's literature. This is to be carried out through comparing and contrasting with other selected on-line 'digital archives' from different archival institutions in London.

To achieve this, the objectives that were set out in the initial proposal had to be revised due to the extensive literature review that has been made. Therefore the revised objectives are as follows:

Objectives are to:

- determine the archival descriptive information framework and general standards
- investigate user-experience of the MIAS Digital Archive through a data collection technique
- investigate trends of cloud computing as a storage place for the digitised manuscripts
- looking into the mechanisms to integrate the two on-line catalogues to increase accessibility
- to look into ways to facilitate findability of MIAS online Catalogue on the Web to increase usability
- seeking the opinion and experience of professional archivists through semi-structured interviews

The above objectives have been set in the proposal, however, after extensive literature review some questions have emerged.

1.1.2 Research questions

There are two dimensions that have been identified from the literature review that are related to digital resources within libraries, archives and museums, and they are usability and collection quality. They are considered the most important facets of the digital archive evaluation, although a brief research of copyright of rare manuscripts will be highlighted. When digital content is evaluated, it is broken up into four categories: digital objects, metadata, information, and collections.

Evaluating subjective cultural factors and the evaluation of the user interface, whether the platform meets user's needs, and if it provides a satisfactory user experience. The research questions were devised based on the actual MIAS online archive as well as the literature that covered the scope of archives and digital archives.

Three main trends were identified:

- user-experience or usability and findability factors
- design, computer-user-interface
- archival standards, concepts and metadata for resource discovery

To be able to evaluate the MIAS digital archive the following key research questions were developed and must be addressed:

- What archival descriptive standards and metadata elements are important for resource discovery?
- How archivists understand and experience digital archives?
- How users, including researchers, are able to identify digital descriptions on MIAS online archive?
- To what extent are copyright issues a barrier to digitisation and Open Access?
- Are there any Open Source online catalogues designed for digital archives?
- How do archivists describe digitised archival items so as to enhance their findability and discoverability?

A data collection technique such as a questionnaire has been utilised to collect respondents' user-experience on usability: how user friendly is the online archival interface. In addition, who uses the online archive most often?

It was also paramount to understand the opinion, knowledge and experience of professional archivist who work at several archival institutions to be able to comprehend archival science and digitisation from a practical dimension. Therefore more research questions were cascaded down in form of interview questions targeting this slice of expertise. It was necessary to compare the MIAS digital archive with other established archives from institutes in London.

This research begins with an overview of MIAS Society and the digital archive project, followed by a review of the literature so to pave the way before the chapters that are concerned with methodology and approach, data collection techniques, findings and analysis and finally the discussion of results.

1.1.3 Scope and definition

The motivation behind this project comes from my interest in Ibn 'Arabi philosophy, the work that he had produced and the affect that he had on later generations. There are no major ambiguous terms that needs to be defined beforehand apart from some definitions that concern the role of archivists in the digital age, but the scope will be limited to the evaluation of MIAS online archive in relation to two dimensions concerning the actual online archive, and the other in comparison to other digital archives that are covered in the chapter six, rather than the validation of the actual manuscripts.

Archives are in a transitional state from analogue to digital but digital archives come have their bundle of issues such as funding, copyright and accessibility. Digital archives therefore are a mixture of IT and professional archival skills, all of which will be covered in the research.

The role of an Archivist role is a fascinating role, because what he/she does today will matters for next generations, therefore it is a role that requires knowledge, experience and skills. On the other hand, this research defines Digital Archives: "the process of the digital preservation or rare work and manuscripts that are considered irreplaceable, and putting them or their descriptions on online catalogues to increase findability and accessibility. The scope of the research is not concerned with born-digital archives or information resources that have been created electronically.

An archive is a collective term and can be used to refer to the materials themselves or the actual place that hold such archives. This research will distinguish between electronic records that are 'born digital' and digitised materials as part of MIAS society manuscript selection criteria.

PART TWO

2 THE MUHYIDDIN IBN 'ARABI SOCIETY (MIAS)

2.1 Overview

The society was founded in 1977 to promote the teachings, the work and philosophy of one of the world's great spiritual teachers. The society gradually began to attract scholars and academic people from all walks of life, and it has become an international association with centres in Oxford, England; Berkeley, California, and an independent affiliate based in Spain where Ibn 'Arabi was born. The Society's main activities range from organising symposiums and workshops, as well as publishing articles in Spanish, Portuguese and Italian.

Furthermore, with its headquarters based in Oxford, it publishes a journal in English twice a year and gets distributed to members all over the world. The journal was first launched in 1982 containing five introductory articles on Ibn 'Arabi with themes of his work and philosophy. In addition to the journal, the society publishes a newsletter containing the activities and reviews of published works of Ibn 'Arabi, translations from both, primary sources and the works of secondary sources authored by academics and independent scholars. MIAS society is thus a beacon for learning and teachings, it organises workshops and tuitions led by the society's prominent members who are well-versed in the concerned field. There is a small library which is housed in a private premise in Oxford, England; and because it is not easily accessible, the society decided to utilize information technology to create an online catalogue that will eventually hold records and descriptions of its resources; although this was an important reason, but also Society has created an online digital archive to function as an online repository for Ibn 'Arabi works and rare manuscripts which is paramount in the digital age.

So far, there are over one thousand copies of digitised manuscripts gathered over the years as well as books and articles which relate to Ibn 'Arabi and later scholars. At the present time the only online project that has been implemented so far is the online archive which was developed in 2015 using a software application called FileMaker Pro. The society's trustees are hoping to catalogue the library's collections of 200 manuscripts, 850 printed works and 800 papers and articles in addition to other resources such as sound recordings, videos, conferences, and academic theses. All these categories of resources are gradually expanding.

2.2 Ibn 'Arabi: the person

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240 A.C.) or Ibn Al-'Arabi was born in the city of Murcia (southern Spain) in the region of Andalusia. He lived almost half of his lifetime in his native country before spending the other half in the near east, Egypt, Iraq, Anatolia (modern-day turkey) and he eventually chose Damascus as his retirement place and where he spent the rest of his life dedicating his time writing.

He was a mystic, philosopher, a poet and has an appreciation to art and aesthetics. He expressed his thoughts in a highly eloquent language; hence his first-hand mystical experience is felt through these primary sources; and indeed the theme of love is predominant in his writings. His ideas have inspired academics, thinkers, believers and lovers of truth worldwide. He believed he possessed divinely-bestowed knowledge received through visions and encounters (of deity or else) throughout his extensive travels in Spain, North Africa and the Middle East.

2.3 MIAS Archive project initiation

It all began in the year 2000 when MIAS Society set out a primary focus to create a digital archive of Ibn 'Arabi's historic manuscripts with the aim to digitise these manuscripts from Turkish libraries in particular where they are kept and preserved. As a necessity they made a trip to Turkey to visit the collections held in the libraries of Istanbul, Konya followed by the other libraries in different Turkish cities. This can only indicate to individual scholars that important manuscripts that are attributed to Ibn 'Arabi are scattered in several libraries in Turkey (see Appendix 8), let alone the manuscripts that are preserved in other libraries in Arabic cities and Europe such as, the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, and El Escorial library in Spain, etc. It is also worth noting here that the Society had received valuable donations from private collectors both in digital format and paper copies from around the world - They have examined, since 2001, 2,800 manuscripts (Clark & Hirtenstein, 2012). The digital archive is one part of the project, the other part is the online catalogue that would only encompasses secondary sources and the Society's own publications. The team responsible are hoping to integrate both catalogues into one tool for to aid researcher and scholarship.

2.4 The Birth of the archive

The ambition of the society to establishing an online archive arose from the need to protect Ibn 'Arabi manuscripts, as there had been an incident where a few manuscripts were stolen from Konya Library in Turkey that triggered serious concerns, and thus the society quickly took the initiative to embark on this project of digitisation of rare manuscripts. It has been a great effort by the society, although there is the copyright issue still looming in the horizon, but the digitised materials now have descriptive information on the online archive accessed via user credentials issued by the librarians, and another freely accessible catalogue that works as a summary of the findings of the archive project, available on http://archive.ibnarabisociety.org/archive_reports/cover.pdf. The snapshot below shows the descriptive information of an online record.

Selected WORK						
RG	13	Title: R. al-Aḥadiyya	Classification: Not IA.	Critical Edition: P	Translations: Y	
Description	Treatise on the meanings of Unity of Being and self-knowledge.					
Bibliographical Comments	OY lists 14 mss. although none can be considered historic mss. The earliest dated copy we have found is c. 949H. It is often found attributed to Awḥad al-dīn ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas’ūd al-Balyānī (d. 686/1287, name given variously as Balbānī, Balabānī, Billiyānī in Suleymaniye online catalogue). It is now widely accepted that this attribution is correct (see M. Chodkiewicz <i>Epître sur l’Unité Absolue</i> , Paris, 1982).					
Related investigated MANUSCRIPTS (via rg_no 13)						
Date	Manuscript Reference & Folio Range			Summary		
949(c)	Shehit Ali	1344	198b - 202a	Attributed to Balyānī. Clear text with red titling.		

In an comprehensive report, Clark & Hirtenstein (2012) wrote their first findings from the MIAS archiving project, and in this report they have described the criteria on which they had based their investigation and selection of the exact corpus of Ibn 'Arabi's works and to determine the

authenticity of manuscripts up to the second generation. In order to do that, they have [perhaps initially] utilised a publication which was prepared by a Syrian librarian in 1964 entitled *Historie et Classification de l'Oeuvre d'Ibn 'Arabi*³ and adopting the classification scheme he has devised based on the prefix RG = Répertoire Général⁴ and has become the standard reference on MIAS digital archive and part of the record descriptions. The primary long-term goal for the Society is to capture all the work of Ibn 'Arabi's work in a digital format but only the work that satisfy the society's manuscript selection criteria.

2.5 Manuscript selection criteria

Investigations of the large historic manuscripts that are concentrated in several libraries in Turkey were carried out based on guidelines for identifying the key manuscripts. Jane Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein have defined three criteria of which at least one should be satisfied; they are:

- 1 the manuscript is written in the hand of Ibn 'Arabi himself or by one of his associates during his lifetime;
2. It is copied from the original;
3. It is written within 90 days of Ibn 'Arabi's death in 1240 A.C.

2.6 Historic manuscript acquisition

The Society has examined around 2,800 rare works or historic manuscripts based aforementioned criteria with an intention to creating a digital archive of 'historic' manuscripts alongside a database to catalogue the details of each work (descriptive information). Therefore, the digital archive project comprises of two-fold purpose, to work as a digital preservation for Ibn 'Arabi's heritage and to facilitate electronic publication and scholarship.

MIAS Society up until the distribution of their report in 2012, which was written by Jane and Stephen, has estimated that there are at least 84 existing authentic works that can be attributed directly to Ibn 'Arabi himself with an addition of 11 that have a high possibility of being authentic. Since the majority of the digitised manuscripts obtained by MIAS from the copyright-held Turkish special collections libraries, it is essential therefore to have a section on copyright of rare manuscripts.

2.7 Permissions and copyright: rare manuscripts

Each and every library that holds special collection is governed by locale intellectual property and copyright legislations and an addition of articulated terms and conditions, and hence users need to comply with these laws. In a paper describing the organisational culture, digitisation, access and copyright within special collection libraries in Turkey, ÖZTEMİZ & ÖNAL (2017) stated that although within Turkish special collection libraries access to manuscripts over digital platforms is possible, but copyright issues prevent researchers from having access to rare works and manuscripts and is a

³ History and Classification of the Work of Ibn 'Arabi

⁴ General Directory

barrier for accessibility and digitisation matters; it is because there are no legal regulations for digitising manuscripts in Turkey. While copyright policies are regulated by Intellectual Property Rights Laws, researchers can only obtain copies of rare manuscripts in microfilms, microfilm prints, photography and CD/DVD media, where CD/DVD has a unique number for identification purposes.

In contrast to the Turkish libraries for example, the British Library has joined partnership as part of a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding⁵ with the Qatar Foundation in 2012 to make archives, maps, rare manuscripts along other information resources freely available online for the first time. The partnership has launched the Qatar Digital Library. The collections are either made available under a Creative Commons share licence or in the Public Domain. In both cases, no part of the Content may be sold, resold, licensed, transferred, copied or reproduced in whole or in part in any manner or in or on any media to any person without the prior written consent of the Qatar Digital Library (QDL, 2017). There will be further discussion on the topic of copyright later in Chapter Five.

⁵ Qatar Foundation partnership programme: <http://www.bl.uk/qatar/>

PART THREE

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Archives and archivists in the 21st century

Archives in the 21st century have come a long way of development and have been shaped as a discipline only in the last 20 years. It has been considered a fundamental bulwark of democracy and have the potential to change people's lives, this is what Elizabeth Lomas, (2010) has stated in her book review entitled: *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England*. The archives in Europe have went through a more measured approach that is a scientific approach, when the study of archives became a stand-alone science over 20 years ago. This approach became known as collection development as mentioned by (Gorman and Shep, 2006, p. 183) in which it gave way to more holistic approach namely collection management. This later was governed through archival standards including digitisation of the intellectual heritage found in archives. This holistic approach of collection management has taken us where we are today in the 21st of century.

When it comes to unique resources, archivists are at the forefront of assisting individual scholars whether historians or researchers at large. Archival theorists who may not be archivists themselves but have written on archives theory and practice which help to create an awareness within the academic community of the importance of archives in modern. Someone can say that if archival theorists are those who set the rules and standards then the role of archivists is to disseminate archival collections to the community through scholarly communication. Before all, the profession of archives, whether as a theorist or a practitioner, is a collaborative one and pours into the benefit of the user, therefore, the utilisation of both reveals hidden collections and lowers the walls of archives (Foscarini, MacNeil, Mak, & Oliver, 2016, p. 14).

In modern times and especially in times where the internet plays a progressive role in the archival profession and archival science is recognised as an essential knowledge resource. Certainly, the field of archives is rich with terminologies, digitisation technology, models and ever growing literature. Digitisation in the 21st century has become extremely popular says Millar (2016), and it is in a growing practise within archival institutions. Digitisation has particularly benefited researchers in Humanities and enriched the field of digital humanities allowing for more collaboration between researchers from different disciplines and increasing knowledge dissemination through publications of rare literature which once were considered 'forgotten books'. Digitalisation in the 21st century has also enriched the phenomena of digital scholarship among individual scholars.

One last point in this section is the concern that archivists raise in regards to the rapid development in digital technology and the effects of that on digital archives and digitisation as a whole, especially in regards to the ever-changing formats of documents due to the continuous development in technology.

3.2 Archival description standards

Standards in connection to archival description are fundamental to the primary mission of the archivist, and therefore, an efficient user-experience depends upon effective archival description. If the descriptive information is accurate and follows an accepted archival standard, then this would make the user's research timely effective (Haworth, 2001). Thus it is essential to each and every record within an archive to be identified using an internationally agreed description standards to set out some rules and structure for the collection (Hider, 2012, p. 134) and (Cullingford, 2011, p. 76). The elements that are used within the descriptive information are called metadata, and according to Foster & Rafferty (2016) it is called metadata structure standards and content rules for the internet environment. In considering the relationship between such important documents and their counterpart descriptions i.e. *metadata*, the International Council on Archives (ICA/CIA, 2000) approved a list of 26 data elements and rules for the description of archives and was called the ISAD(G) (*General International Standard Archival Description*). Among these 26 elements, 6 are mandatory and they are: *Reference code*, *Title*, *Name of Creator*, *Dates of Creation*, *Extent of the Unit of Description*, and *Level of Description* (Cullingford, 2011, p. 78), and therefore this standard provides a framework for archivists. Archives Hub, for instance, the well-known repository run by JISC has adopted the ISAD(G) guidelines of 6 elements making them mandatory except the *Creator* element. The Archives Hub also asks for 3 more elements which provide essential information for researchers and they are *Conditions Governing Access*, *Language of Material*, and *Scope and Content*. However, the professionals who work on digital archives tend to use in-house guidelines beside the ISAD(G) elements to reflect their unique collections covering multi-levels of description in the sense of fonds, sub-fonds, series, files, etc.

Thereafter came EAD (*Encoded Archival Description*) standard, and like ISAD(G) support multi-level description that is expressed in XML schema and DTD (*Document Type Definition*) designed specifically for archival collections to support the online finding aids (Brown A. , 2013, p. 163). EAD gained international acceptance perhaps because it is was based on SGML, an internationally recognised standard for mark-up languages. There are various number of archival metadata standards, and they can be overwhelming, and more detail descriptions can be found on the Archives and Records Association website⁶ and because of this reason they cannot all be mentioned in this dissertation. The benefit of EAD in relation to archival description is just like MARC standard for electronic bibliographic records, it helps to keep descriptive information contained (Haworth, 2001).

3.3 Archival metadata

Metadata is an integral part of description standards of both digital archives and book cataloguing management systems, it becomes a symbol for digital information organisation to facilitate discovery of relevant information in the context of the internet and helps to identify and organise electronic objects, whether in form of images, documents or any other digitised materials. Therefore, it is paramount for archivists to make sure their electronic collections are well-described through the

⁶ ARA: archival standards: <http://www.archives.org.uk/about/sections-interest-groups/archives-a-technology/news-and-events.html>

use of metadata elements, because it also facilitates cross-collection and cross-institution searching (Hider, 2012, p. 131). Elements like title, date, creator, description, size, are all to help identify online materials stored on digital archives and catalogues. It also helps the facilitation of inter-operability between different systems and Dublin Core Metadata Initiative has a document on such standard and specification⁷ making it an international standard. It is worth mentioning that metadata provides interoperability, at the schema level, between systems and this useful for integrating digital archives with online book catalogues (Zeng & Qin, 2008, p. 275).

3.4 Beyond Derrida's archive fever

Four writers are particularly significant in the field of archives and postmodernism, these are Derrida, Foucault, Fanon and Sartre. Postmodernism refers to a range of evolving epistemological approaches to archive science. Of the four, Derrida is the most influential, in the sense his work on archives is the most frequently cited by writers (Tough, 2016).

Derrida wrote an article in 1995 called 'Archive Fever', in relation to the human desire to return to the roots, and has described that effective democracy can be measured through the archival accessibility to the masses and their ability to participate and interpret collections, emphasising on the user as a beneficiary of this process. And not just that, as if he is trying to convey a message compatible to a quote attributed to the Spanish philosopher George Santayana⁸ that says, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Furthermore, Archive Fever emphasis on the unlimited intellectual value of every archival document (Earlie, 2015). Although what has been said regarding archive fever is sensible, but today and in the digital age, another fever has appeared and that is what I would call the Digital Archive Fever of ambitious archival institutions to digitise their collections and unique material and provide accessibility⁹. In light of that, one should not get carried away by adopting digital archives without critically studying the issues that surrounds physical archives. Interestingly we also find Kim (2015) speaks of Digital Archive Fever in his PhD thesis in regards to the mass digital transformation of physical collections of archives outside of library and archival communities, and Kim furthermore says, "... digital archives have become one of the main activities under the big tent of the digital humanities."

⁷ DCMI: **Interoperability Levels for Dublin Core Metadata**, <http://dublincore.org/documents/interoperability-levels/>

⁸ Born in Spain and died in Rome (1863-1952), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Santayana

⁹ Steiner, M. (2017) Resisting Digital Archive Fever: a critical investigation into the management of QTIPOC cultural heritage in the digital environment. MSc Library Science dissertation.

3.5 DIGITAL ARCHIVES

It is common to use online archives and digital archives interchangeably as I will do throughout this dissertation, however it is imperative to know that digitised materials are not the same as born-digital. Digitised records are copies of the original documents which come in form of manuscripts or books, while born-digital are machine-readable records and created in electronic format from the start (Millar, 2017). Librarians and in particular Archivists use the term paper records or documents to refer to resources that include but not limited to letters, maps and photographic images.

3.5.1 Physical and digital archives

Nowadays we cannot separate between the archival profession in traditional terms and digital archives in modern time, but someone still needs to draw a line between descriptive information that relate to either types of archives, for instance Zhang & Mauney (2013), have affirmed in their article that archivists are aware of the difference between the digital descriptive metadata *content* and the traditional archival description *context*, although they are facing challenges in terms of metadata descriptions of digital objects. As a consequence digitally-related standards have been developed to accommodate the typology the digital archival presentation to ensure that digitalised materials are made accessible to users in their archival context (Zhang & Mauney, 2013). There is a growing interest among the archival community in making digital archives more organised, better described, and made available for use on the Web, beside their traditional role to protect, preserve the authenticity and integrity of records (Zhang, Archival Context, Digital Content, and the Ethics of Digital Archival Representation, 2012).

3.5.2 Digitisation and digital preservation

The purpose of digitisation is to add value to the analogue collections by connecting content with the readers, and make life easier for the researcher to access materials in the comfort of their zone rather travelling to a distant land to fetch for manuscripts that can be accessed digitally. Therefore, digital libraries and archives are paramount for thorough research and are “the library of the future” (Deegan & Sutherland, 2009, p. 137). Until recently, digitisation projects were driven by scholarly need says Deegan and Sutherland (2009) and this is the case of libraries, but archives are often driven by their concerns to protect endangered work on the one hand, and reducing the damage that may be caused by continues handling of special collections.

Every archive that is planning to digitise their collections must put in their consideration the strategies and techniques required to ensure that digital information remains accessible and usable over a long period of time. The goal of preservation is to maintain objects for as long as required, in a form which is authentic, and accessible to users and likewise in electronic form, although a digital master copy is not like the originally preserved material, it just reduces the ‘wear and tear’ effect that caused by handling of the original. Therefore the focus on unique materials and rare books is better in terms of digitisation. Digitisations projects currently are a significant part of many institutions all over the world, particularly in relation to archives and will be even more numerous in the years to come (Rosati, 2013).

3.5.3 Archivists and scholarly communications

Engaging in scholarly communication by archivists is significant in the archival profession and fruitful on the personal level. It is important therefore asserts Meehan (2010) for an archivist to take an expanding role of educating researchers and the public at large on the use of the archival materials, and to adopt the role of researchers and contribute to academia in the context of archive science and studies, and perhaps in humanities disciplines too. However, according to several journal articles and other online resources, archivists generally don't engage in scholarly communication by diving deep into the content of their collections to understand them better (Vassilakaki & Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2017) and (Chaudron, 2015). It is true that archival work is sensitive and requires a lot of attention and an archivist has pressing needs including selecting materials for digitisations. Sauer (2009) put an emphasis from a stand point of being an archivist herself, and said, "It's absolutely essential for archivists to be involved in scholarly communication at their institutions, both for what we have to offer and for what we have to gain."

3.5.3 User studies

There are hardly any online services that provide access to knowledge that are not concerned with what their users say about the service they facilitate, however according to Walton (2017) and Rhee (2015) indicate that such institutions do not undertake usability study, especially institutional archives in comparison to digital libraries research publications. According to Hea Lim Rhee (2015) who said, "There is no study exclusively focusing on this development of archival user studies. Usability studies would investigate factors that happened to archives such as changing research trends, research interests, and developing technology. It is imperative for archivists therefore to recognise user studies so that they can effectively serve their communities and members in a productive way."

When archivists conduct user studies through whatever means, there and then the user's information needs can best be accommodated by the archivists (Borteye and De Porres Maaseg, 2013). Furthermore, user studies provide clear understanding to how effective archives and particularly online archives function. Archives are increasingly becoming digital and as a consequence providing online access to remote users is vital for research, but it brings with it new challenges for archivists.

Walton (2017) asserts that there is plenty of room remains for improvement for online catalogues usability and interface design, especially when only a few usability studies have focused on digital archival interfaces including online EAD and finding aids. Furthermore, it is paramount that users understand the online collection descriptions through online finding aids and the adopting of EAD without the need to consult archivists (Meissner, 1997). However, ten years ago archivists began to question the functionality of online finding aids, because of some vague terminologies such as "linear extent" and "fonds" says (Walton, 2017). Seeking user feedback must be incorporated in the strategy of any digital archive project and thus the online questionnaire of this research has targeted users to help evaluate MIAS digital archive and their feedback can later be transformed into useful recommendations to enhance and develop the digital archive.

3.5.4 Resource discovery online catalogues

Despite the best efforts of libraries, museums and archives to create digital archives, many of them have been created as 'digital silos', making the discovery and use of their content difficult for researchers, meanwhile, there are several resource discovery online catalogue or repositories to aid findability of archives designed as a single point of access to descriptions of physical archives held in the UK, among these tools are, Archives Hub, AIM25, The National Archive (TNA) Discovery, and the international ArchiveGrid¹⁰, etc. There are other repositories dedicated to disciplines, such as Arts and Humanities. Most if not all are developed in the last 7 years of which TNA was developed in 2012. These online tools are the best choice forward for archivists, who have limited capacities to design and fund their own online digital archival catalogue, to put all or a selection of their collection descriptions on them. They also can be a great instrument to redirect users to the actual institutional online catalogue and helps in raising the profile of archives.

Other institutions took a different approach. The National Library of Wales for example, has developed a different approach, making content openly available for use and re-use, exemplifying the principles of the Open-GLAM (Open Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum) movement. This has enabled a traditional research organisation to play a role in supporting researchers' use of its digital content (Foster & Rafferty, 2016).

¹⁰ ArchiveGrid includes over 5 million records describing archival materials from over 1,000 archival institutions, <http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/>

PART FOUR

4 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

With consideration to the research questions, it has been determined to approach the research from more than one side, and since it possible to apply and blend different approaches, a mixed research method was taken enhance explanation (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p. 229). For the sake of having a broader view of the impact of digital archives on archivists as well as users of Ibn 'Arabi online archive, a survey research method (with an emphasis on the qualitative rather than quantitative research) was chosen with a mixed-data collection techniques. Data collection consisted of two elements: one to one interviews with professional archivists, and an online questionnaire targeting MIAS members. Another qualitative method namely comparative study was used to aid in the evaluation of MIAS digital archive. The comparative study would be guided by a set of criteria as an evaluation framework to compare MIAS digital archive with other institutional online archives.

The data gathering techniques targeted users of MIAS archive and they consisted of researcher both students and academics. Ibn 'Arabi society committee helped to spread the knowledge of the survey through the society's mailing-list. As for the in person interviews approach, it sought to answer approximately 15 questions divided into three categories, and they are: Archivist profession, Users of archives and digital archives, and technical questions related to digital archives. The interviewed professionals were selected to reflect the size-scale and history of their institutions. The combination of questionnaire and interviews allowed for wider interesting outcomes from user and professional perspectives.

4.1 Questionnaire

This is the first data collection technique that was used to collect data from respondents. Online questionnaires are popular means of collecting people opinion, and therefore was used to collect MIAS opinion of the digital archive project from the angel of user-experience with a basic assumption in mind, and that is the respondent will be willing and able to give truthful answers that can be used for further analysis and findings and help in the evaluation process of MIAS project.

4.1.1 Design

The survey questionnaire was used to determine the present status of MIAS online archive in regards to usability. The questionnaire is mainly targeting those who are already members or others who use the archive for research purposes. The questionnaire was created using Google Form, which offers a direct access to survey results and it represent the values into charts. The results are downloadable as CSVs file and be analysed using MS Excel.

The questions were derived from the understanding of topics in the literature review process, which were based on and around the Archive Science and digital archives and the usability matters. The questionnaire was also based on the research questions on usability, accessibility, and user experience. The questionnaire was advertised after consulting, both the MIAS librarian and the society's website administrator and who in turn tested the survey for understandability before

deploying it on social media and the MIAS mailing-list. It has been decided to deploy the online questionnaire once. This strategy helps to keep the same formulation of the survey questions for consistency purpose, and so that the respondents would answer the same set of questions once and for all.

4.1.2 Distribution of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was deployed and disseminated through the Society's member mailing-list where it has been suggested it would be better to disseminate the questionnaire through the society's website. In this way it will boost trustworthiness by members and to maximise respondents. The snapshot (Appendix: 5) shows the actual webpage that was created by the MIAS and which was added as a URL link onto the society's newsletter. Besides that, social media like Facebook has been utilised as a platform for the same purpose. The questionnaire was also disseminated through another society based in Scotland known by the Beshara Trust, where their newsletter administrator was willing to include a section on the survey questionnaire on their next newsletter. These three mediums had exposed the survey further allowing for more people to contribute to the survey.

The majority of respondents had filled out the questionnaire in the English language except one response who is a native speaker of French language. To this particular case Google translator has been utilised to translate the response section by section and the translation was checked with a French-speaking acquaintance.

4.2 The interview process

Next to online questionnaire, six participants were interviewed, 5 archivists and one digitisation project manager. The interviewees were from different institutions in London but sharing the same ground. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the participants' experiences and perspectives in relation to the archives that they are responsible for especially in relation to digital archives and their institutional digitisation projects. These institutions varied in the size of their collections. To keep to the integrity of the research topic, the participants who contributed to the research were from the archival profession within institutions that have digitised collections and therefore have an online digital archive, or they are in the process to do so. This strategy was chosen so that the interview questions can be fully answered by people who come from the same profession and their tasks and duties are essentially uniform. The participants were contacted by emails and were sent a participant information sheet and the transcribed interviews, both are included in Appendix 3 and 8 respectively.

The interviews were recorded using a dictophone which made the interview goes smoothly with no interruptions from either one. The interview questions consisted of 16 questions and the interview process was based on open-ended question allowing for more room to ask further questions for clarification when necessary. The duration of each interview was set to one hour; however, all the interviews took on average 35 minutes.

There were several themes of coding derived from the interview questions, and therefore, the transcribed interviews were analysed using NVivo (qualitative data analysis). This is to draw out the most important points of the conducted interviews; the interviews were all conducted in the participants' workplace after a confirmation of interview date and time.

4.3 Limits of the Research

The data has been collected via the two research techniques mentioned above and recommendations will be based on the discussion of the results and findings. There will be a short comparative study of one of the six institutional archives that has similar settings as MIAS archive based on a set of criteria, but with reference to important points raised by all the interviewed archivists on the one hand, and the respondents from MIAS members on the other hand. The comparison will assist the evaluation of MIAS digital archive. The evaluation criteria will be drawn from the survey research methodology. I, the researcher, worked on a neutral basis avoiding any bias that may prevent explicit results. Although the research is by no means comprehensive, it does not include design and implementation of online catalogues or digital archive.

PART FIVE

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire (see appendix 6) was deployed on 9th of August 2017 and closed on 3rd of November 2017 for the analysis stage. The total numbers of responses were 20 of which only one respondent completed the questionnaire twice within a period of 3 days. So a decision has been made to only select his latest response reducing the total number to 19. Almost all the respondents are members of MIAS Society and therefore they were keen, it seems, to complete the entire questionnaire.

Section 1 of 7 of the online questionnaire is a brief description on the project and for the respondent to give their permission to use the data for research purpose.

5.1.1 User relationship to the MIAS digital archive

Section 2 of 7 is to collect data on the respondent's relationship to MIAS Society, which comprises of 3 questions; whether or not the respondent is a member, respondent's awareness of MIAS archive project, and the respondent's professional categories; they are analysed as follows:

Question 1: MIAS Membership

Most of Ibn 'Arabi Society members are non-scholars but the vast majority of them are active learners and 'students of Ibn 'Arabi work' therefore out of 19 respondents, 15 are members and 4 are non-members (Figure 1). Membership allows users to have access to the digital archive as well as receiving the Society's journal which is published twice a year.

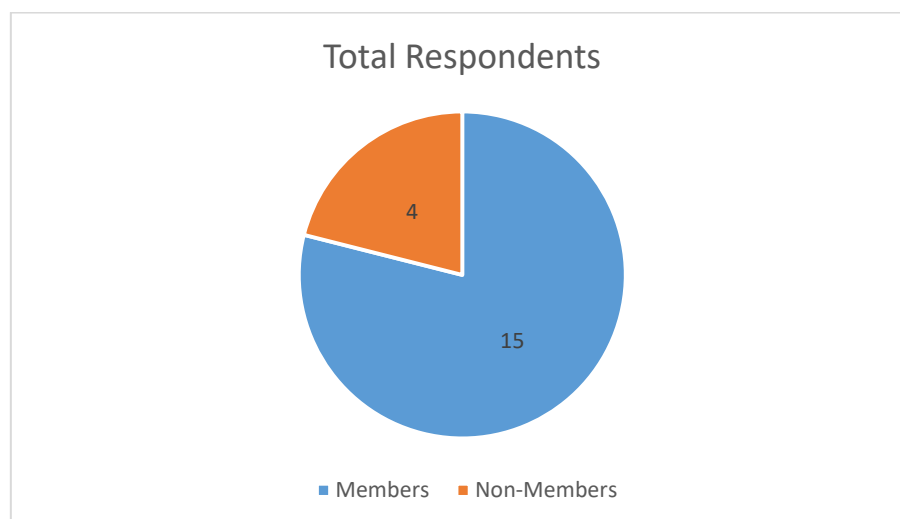


Figure 1: Total respondents

The number of respondents is small in comparison to total number of members of the Society; nevertheless, the analysis will be according to data at hand rather than the total number of respondents. Although it would have been relevant to the research to ask the respondents about their geographical locations since two of the respondents had answered in two European languages

French and Spanish, which was not expected, but the digital archive is currently in the English language and accessible online via the World Wide Web. In addition, most of MIAS resources are in English therefore knowing the respondent's locations will only be relevant for diversity purposes and it is not relevant to this research.

Question 2: MIAS Digital Archive Awareness

When the respondents were asked if they are aware of Ibn 'Arabi digital archive project, 18 answered 'Yes', and it is a pleasing total and can only indicate that these respondents who affirmed their knowledge of the digital archive project are either engaged with the Society at some level or they read the newsletter that the Society sent out via its mailing-list.

Question 3: Respondents' Professional Category

To identify the expert level of each and every respondent another question was posed which is related to self-identification. The 5 categories as below: academic research student, Independent scholar, University lecturer, Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies and 'Other' (*please specify if other*). Most respondents, and because of my personal knowledge, come from the Humanities studies. It is an indication, *for those who are involved in scholarly research*, to their mindfulness of research techniques and skills, and how to use key terms to retrieve specific information. The following is a table illustrating the number of respondents by category:

Professional Category	Number of Respondents
academic research student	1
independent scholar	5
university lecturer	2
expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	7
other	4

Table 1: Professional categories listed on the questionnaire

Although the number of respondents was small and may have lacked in enough data to be generalised, it has however allowed for a thorough investigation to the background of each respondent. Out of 19 respondents 4 provided different professional categories, and they are: 'personal study', long-time student of Ibn 'Arabi, none of the above (categories), work in the NHS. The respondent who provided the least answers is the one who categorised him/herself under 'personal study' (Figure 2).

The respondents who are 'expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies' are either MPhil or PhD holders and wrote at least one journal article on one of Ibn 'Arabi's themes. Furthermore, 2 respondents who are under the category of 'University Lecturer' are also PhD degree holders. As for those who selected 'Independent Scholar' who have no ties to academia, at least one possessed a PhD and another possessed an MPhil. The majority of respondents are either aware of research methods and techniques or work in academia in different disciplines. It would have been a preference to receive more respondents from the two categories of 'academic research student' and 'Other' to measure the results against those who come from academic and hold at least a higher post-graduate degree. Nevertheless, the upcoming analysis will shed light on this issue.

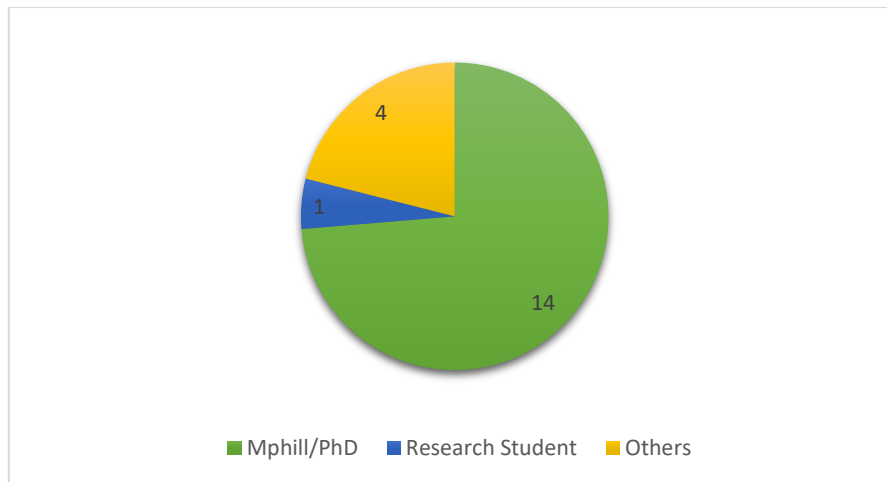


Figure 2: Academic or education level of respondents

5.1.2 The Digitisation of Ibn 'Arabi's rare Manuscripts

Section 3 of 7 is composed of 3 questions on the online archive and how important to each and every respondent in terms of research and interest and whether or not the respondents are working in the field of archival science. This last point may allow the user to share important opinion and experience in relation to other archives and/or digital archives.

Question 1: Digital archive website

This question allows the user to answer the question 'Have you navigated through the MIAS online archive before?' The optional answer was not just an exclusive disjunction, a pair of alternatives of which only one is acceptable; there was a third option and this is to allow the respondents to articulate their own responses, such "Yes, but only once" and "Not sure, I might have done some years ago on the information page only, I was awaiting the username and password credentials to access the actual online archive catalogue", thus the respondents who answered with a 'Yes' were 12 and those who answered with a 'No' were 7. Out of the 7 experts mentioned above only 4 said they have navigated through the digital archive. Furthermore 2 of the 5 'Independent Study' respondents have navigated the archive, although at this level there is no indication on whether they were satisfied or not in terms of user-experience. This will be analysed in Section 4 of the online questionnaire.

Question 2: MIAS digital archive and user relationship

The question posed was 'What does MIAS's archive digitisation project mean to you?' – There were a total of 19 respondents and as expected, all the answers were positive and supportive. I expected that, because the actual project itself is an important step in the preservation of Ibn 'Arabi's work and would receive a great admiration from members. For instance, one respondent said regarding accessibility to digitised manuscripts on MIAS digital archive, "An opportunity to find reliable manuscripts not easily accessible elsewhere." Others expressed that, "major improvement over previous Turkish archives", and "It is the most comprehensive archive of works by any pre-modern Muslim author"; and interestingly both quotes came from two 'experts of Ibn 'Arabi studies', while a University Lecturer said, the digital archive is "an essential tool for my research."

Several others commented on the usefulness of having such digital archive and the potential benefits on research and scholarship in field in question, and offers a quick reference on the subject.

The two respondents who answered in French and Spanish said, “la preservation et la sauvegarde des écrits du shaykh al-akbar”, which in English means, “the preservation and safeguarding of the writing of shaykh al-akbar”, and the Spanish respondent commented with, “Buscar los valores Ibn Arabi para plicarlos en la actualidad”, which in English means, “to search Ibn ‘Arabi works are valuable to [apply] in nowadays”; in a sense the comment meant that allowing accessibility to search important rare manuscripts that apply in modern times in terms of theme and context. It is important to mention that the digitised manuscripts are not accessible online because of copyright.

Question 3: Digitisation experience

The participant was asked if they he/she is an archivist or digitisation professional working within the field of humanities? Out of 19 respondents only one confirmed knowledge of digitisation techniques, the respondent is an independent scholar. The rest are neither archivists nor aware of the digital preservation of rare manuscripts, although most of them come from the Arts and Humanities disciplines.

5.1.3 MIAS Online Archive Effectiveness and Usability

Section 4 of 7, this section comprised of 5 questions on user experience and satisfaction with the current online catalogue interface. To determine the method of response there was a mix of 1 open-ended to permit free responses from respondents and 4 fixed-response questions. This strategy was taken to encourage responses.

Question 1: Users' capability to source information from MIAS online archive

This open-ended question, ‘In your opinion, what should be done to improve users' capability to source information from MIAS online archive?’ received 13 varied answers that ranged from: “no suggestions” and “it is fine” to more specific requests, such as, “upload the manuscripts themselves” and “to upload at least a sample of one page of each manuscript.” - One respondent said, “Use letters of the alphabet as links in the title to quickly find works”, with such an in mind, one cannot precisely determine what the respondent meant by this, one can only speculate that this user prefers to see the words in the title element of the records hyperactive and directly linked to work, but having said that, the works is not openly licenced, therefore it is not possible in the current time due to copyright restrictions by the libraries that hold the physical manuscripts (see appendix 9 for list of these libraries); and these libraries too, do not facilitate access to the digitised manuscripts. Another respondent finds the online digital archive to be “very good”, and thus couldn’t suggest any improvement to source information on MIAS online archive.

Below are the fix-response questions – which are 5 scale fix-response questions from 20% to 100%, where 20% refers to weak and 100% refers to strong in relation to the effectiveness and efficiency of the digital archive. The questions on user satisfaction and their appreciation of the digital archive were on the scale range from satisfied to extremely satisfied, not impressive to very impressive regarding the MIASA user interface (UI):

- **Effectiveness of UI**
- **Efficiency of UI**
- **Satisfaction of UI**
- **How impressive the visual layout?**

The responses varied in scale and two answers were not accurate enough, in the sense the answers were not based on user-experience, because both respondents said in the aforementioned open-ended question that they have not used the online archive, their answers are irrelevant, and however they had selected what they saw as appropriate.

Question	Scale				
	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Effectiveness	1	0	4	8	4
Efficiency	2	2	3	9	3
Satisfaction	2	0	7	5	5
Impression	1	2	6	5	5

Table 2

From the data on Table 2 one can elicit that the majority of users were in favour of praising the digital archive interface in terms of its effectiveness and efficiency. Indeed hard work has been put in the user interface (see chapter six), with a sensible layout of descriptive information although not based on the archival description standard. 12 users in this case thought the records provided quality results (effective), while 12 thought the records can be retrieved quick enough.

A large proportion of users/respondents provided a total response that is above-than-average on the scale in regards to their satisfaction (Figure 3). In fact, 17 respondents were satisfied with the current MIAS user interface. This would raise the question whether the user interface is indeed user-friendly and would incorporate some important aspects of UI design, such as consistent design, functionality, pleasing to the eye, clarity and high responsivity, and attractiveness. The table below shows the respondents relation to question posed on user's opinion on MIAS UI.

19 responses

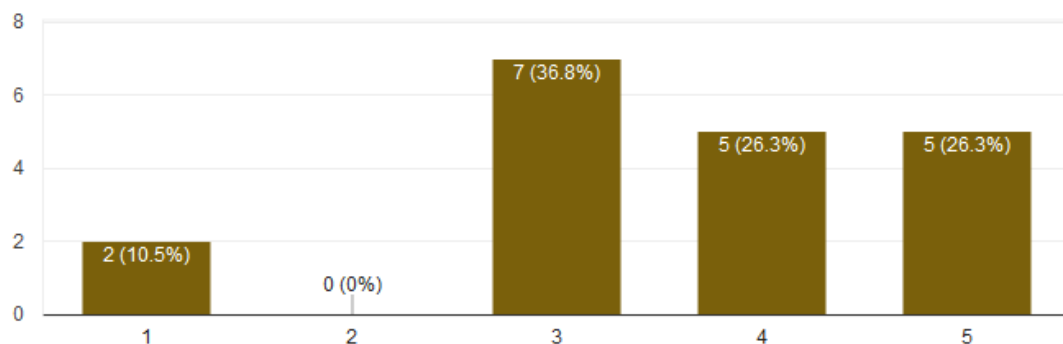


Figure 3: User satisfaction

5.1.4 MIAS Digital Archival Catalogue Records

Section 5 of 7, this section has some questions that are related to the actual content of the archival catalogue and what else the user would like to see available on the archival catalogue. Each manuscript is a digitised version of the original which were carefully selected using a pre-set criteria devised by the curator's team of Ibn 'Arabi society, (see Part Two).

Question 1: Descriptive Information

The respondents were asked about their insight on or perception of the digitised manuscripts in relation to the online descriptive information reflected in the elements for each record. The question posted is, 'what is your perception of the manuscripts predefined description elements? (i.e. title, date(s), appraisal, usage rights, etc.)', The comments received were diverse and ranged from "not competent to answer", "I don't know", to online description is "very clear." Of the 19 respondents, one who wished to see more improvement, but did not describe in what way. No one has mentioned things related to the archival description standards including the prominent researchers mentioned above, in fact there is no mention of metadata. One respondent who has a preference to extend manuscript description to indicate which is which but also adds, "All are adequate and clear in relation to archival description elements." Another respondent mentioned that the overall descriptive fields 'are good' but the actual scope and content is not up to date. Finally one respondent who is an expert in Ibn 'Arabi studies said, "It is very clear to use and logically organised."

In trying to build up a picture from all the comments that were provided by the 19 respondents, we may construct that the overall majority are pleased with the current digital archival description, expressing their perception of the descriptive information as, good, very good, sufficient, very clear, fine, clear and accessible, adequate and clear. Furthermore, there were important suggestions such as, to indicate whether the digitised manuscripts are critically edited, published/unpublished, to have an interactive content for each record and some fields require checking and precision. These important factors will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

Question 2: What else would you like to see in the digital archival catalogue?

This question was placed after the previous question on user's perception to allow users to key-in new ideas that they might have seen on other digital archives which are missing from the MIAS archive, and again, there were several interesting responses. A total of 17 respondents provided varied answers including two who basically said, they don't know.

Someone can see a pattern in the answers allowing someone to understand how the respondents viewed the purpose of any digital archives. In their opinion, for example, digital archives should contain actual copies or images of rare works and manuscripts, and this is the case so for many institutional digital archives, e.g. The Digital Library. In explain their preferences, 6 respondents suggested if possible to see pictures or images of manuscripts or sample of pages along with the description elements. For instance, an expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies said, "[to see] sample images especially notes of Sama'¹¹ and Ijzat¹² for each and every manuscript", and a University lecturer said, to see more of "codicological details of the digitised manuscripts." – As previously mentioned, the respondents' comments are centred on the word 'image'. Two more expert respondents proposed to see edited editions of the manuscripts and publications from outside of the MIAS English journal and Western academia. 3 respondents has not suggested anything and 2 stated "I don't know".

¹¹ Sama' : سماع Arabic term used to refer to loud reading of newly authored work in previous centuries. It helps the author to receive live comments and corrections.

¹² Ijaza : اجازة a term means permission which is given to selected individuals to propagate the author's work and use it as a reference. It is like Creative Common Licences in modern time.

The responses to the above posed question can be roughly divided into the following points – so again, the users of the MIAS digital archive would like to see more of:

- images, photographs of the manuscripts (6 respondents)
- downloadable selected pages of the manuscripts (1 respondent)
- digitised of old and recent critical editions of the digitised manuscripts (1 respondent)
- studies on Ibn 'Arabi and his interpreters from non-western academia (1 respondent)
- an online option to request a copy of manuscripts (1 respondent) rather than by email.

Question 3: The role of the Librarian

It has been thought useful if the participants were asked, 'how collaborative is the librarian in answering your information needs?' of which two respondents indicated the question not applicable to them since they have not contacted the MIAS librarian before, while the rest mentioned that the librarian is collaborative, very helpful and open to suggestions and corrections made by them. On the other hand, the Librarian was asked in a one-to-one meeting with her that she tries to respond to emails within a few days, and most communication is done via email. Although the idea of digital archives is to minimise the amount of requests for manuscripts and information by email, but in principle the role of the librarian is still considered vital in providing relevant information to each and every researcher. Currently all the digitised materials are stored on a local computer and the librarian would send PDF copies by email; she would hope to have an online storage for ease of access and can be accessed remotely whilst she is travelling. This in her opinion would speed up the communication process between herself and users.

Section 6 of 7, gives the respondents the opportunity to provide information on other digital archives that they have used in regards to its interface design and the online records. And in addition to further comments and suggestions.

The purpose is to seek information on other digital archives that may be used for the précis of comparative study in Chapter Six. Although this section did not receive too many responses, but there were some interesting responses. Two online catalogues were suggested that are related to rare manuscripts and may as well hold some of the Ibn 'Arabi rare works and manuscripts. Al-Kindi online catalogue, for example, provides more than 20,000 classical texts of the Arabic and Islamic heritage. The online catalogues and resources in general are:

- Al-Kindi catalogue of the Library of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO) <https://alkindi.ideo-cairo.org/>
- King Saud University, KSA, <http://makhtota.ksu.edu.sa/MakhtotaEnglish.aspx>

Other online academic and research tools that were suggested:

- academia.edu
- Encyclopaedia Iranica <http://www.iranicaonline.org/>
- corpus.quran.com <http://corpus.quran.com/>
- historyofphilosophy.net <https://historyofphilosophy.net/>

The History of Philosophy 'without any gaps' is a valuable resource on Philosophy, where Ibn 'Arabi is mentioned within the section of Islamic World under the category of Andalusia, but only contains

contemporary secondary resources; this can only emphasize on how essential is the MIAS digital archive for researchers beyond the membership restriction where users need access via credentials.

When the respondents were asked if they have further comments, 11 out of 19 provided responses expressing their appreciation of the MIAS Archive project, apart from one respondent who provided a prolonged response in form of an advice. The respondent is a PhD holder and an expert in Ibn 'Arabi's work, who said (*roughly translated from French*):

I think that, in general, there is not enough "current" information; for example, it would be necessary to notify the current research scholars on this or that writing which would prevent 3 scholars working on a critical edition of a text at the same time (!!!);

Whenever MIAS is informed that a scholar is working on the editing of an Ibn 'Arabi text, this must be notified in the corresponding RG but also in the home page in "recent post"; the scholars should be encouraged to take part in the update of the RG (send them an email to each one asking them to notify on the archive project the information they have about the publication of an edition, or the question of the attribution of this or that writing).

The Archive project must be a collective work, much remains to be done in this area; the homepage should be redesigned: in "recent post" is a link, very useful, for the manuscripts of the BN Paris on Ibn 'Arabi free access; there are other libraries with free access to scanned manuscripts, El Escorial Library in Spain and others.

I think we should do the same thing. Skills exist but they are not used enough! Regular work meetings should be scheduled between the main project managers to update, review the comments, and check that answers have been given to the questions asked in these comments, take stock of the new editions of the project. Ibn 'Arabi's writings appear at a high rate, often of mediocre quality, to warn about works that are known to be out of place, which would prevent young researchers from engaging in research that is based on a work that is not Ibn Arabi!

Someone can extract a few important points from the above valuable response, [I] research scholars must be notified through a general note in the description of each record particularly on manuscripts where a critical edition has been done or manuscripts undergoing critical editing; [II] the scholars should be encouraged to take part in the updates by posting under each relevant record of the digital archive. The respondent also emphasised on the fact that [III] archive projects must be a collective one. Furthermore, the respondent pointed out to some other points, such as [IV] libraries including the famous Library of El Escorial in Spain which holds Openly licenced digitised manuscripts of which some are attributed to Ibn 'Arabi; also [V] regular meetings should be scheduled for the digital archive project managers to review and update the posts, and respond to comments that are made by the research scholars; [VI] such points collectively would assist young researchers to verify works that are wrongfully attributed to Ibn 'Arabi.

Section 7 of 7, asked respondents for an optional entry of their full name for prospective correspondences and to help the researcher to identify who participated in the survey and aid the analysis process. Indeed this section was useful to identify respondents by their full name in terms of their academic professionalism, as the researchers is familiar with research scholars in the field of

Ibn 'Arabi studies because he has completed a guide to Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy as part of the Information Resources and Documentation (INM307) module.

5.2 INTERVIEWS

Thematic coding was used to analyse the transcribed interviews and the research questions on the role of archivist, activities of digitisation, record description and metadata standards, usability, evaluation and feedback.

As noted in the methodology section, 6 participants were interviewed of which one is a project manager who had a strong knowledge of digital archives as well as a good knowledge of who an archivist is. To analyse the answers of these interviews a qualitative analysis package, NVivo, has been used to enhance the analysis process. To search for trends and patterns 9 codes or categories have been drawn from the interview questions, to investigate and explore the collected data under these categories. The categories (codes) are as follows:

- archival profession and unique materials
- scholarly communication
- rare manuscripts and copyright
- online catalogues (and integrating catalogues)
- descriptive information and metadata elements
- storage of digital materials
- user accessibility to digital archives
- user feedback and online catalogues

The 6 participants or interviewees were chosen from mixed levels of institutions in London but they all involve in digitisations of either rare manuscripts or materials that are considered valuable, although the depth of digitisations varies from institute to another. The interviewees held in common an overall understanding of what it means to be an archivist in the classical sense of the role and in the digital age as well.

5.2.1 *Archival Profession and unique materials*

Nancy Charles, an Archivist at the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) defined an archivist as someone who looks and cares for papers and manuscripts to package, sort and catalogue them to provide accessibility and ways to access the materials safely. As for Sarah Broadhurst from the Zoology Society, London (ZSL), answered the posed question from her own stand point as an archivist saying, "I'm responsible for the preservation, conservation, ordering, describing and making accessible of the institution's collections from modern day to records that date back to 1826." - She deals mostly with unpublished materials but not necessarily unique.

Susannah Gillard from the British Library Qatar Foundation partnership project (QDL) described an Archivist from her role as 'Content Specialist Archivist' and therefore a definition can be constructed from her answer as someone who follow archival description standards and making accessible

digitised materials on the QDL¹³, therefore it is important for an archivist to understand catalogue descriptions to create new ones based on the known standards.

Both Susannah as well as Richard Temple, the archivist at Senate House Library (SHL) both emphasised on the catalogue record description field of 'scope and content' of digital materials. The term "Scope and Content" as one term was mentioned by 5 archivists, Susannah and Richard mentioned it 11 and 6 respectively. The term is treated in this sense as a single element that comprises of several fields which are used based on established institutional internal policies and guidelines all setup for the benefit of the user to enable and enhance resource discovery. While the term Content was mentioned 16 times, of which Susannah and Richard mentioned it 9 and 3 respectively.

In practice, archivists tend to work with unique materials but it depends on how they perceive unique materials. The interviewees don't consider themselves working with only unique materials as a synonymous to rare manuscripts, Richard Temple for instance used to work on modern materials comprises of published materials and asserted that generally focusing on the uniqueness of materials is a good way to define an archivist but it is not only limited to such type. Susannah Gillard also holds the same opinion by affirming that in practice, archivists tend to work with unique materials but their duties are not limited to this aspect.

For Victoria Sloyan and her colleague Anthony Day, the archivists at the Wellcome Trust (WT), the archival profession at WT involve several steps and perhaps several department due to the extent of the WT. Their role as archivists within a health oriented foundation imply that they deal with health specific collection criteria. As part of the collection process, they would select materials considered to be of an archival value, or as Anthony puts it, "materials that we can propose to be digitised", then they get accession and catalogued as well as placed online as a record with descriptive information.

The WT is a well-funded trust therefore the digitisation of such newly acquired archival materials are implemented by the digitisation team along with another team doing the preparatory work to make sure that the materials are in good condition to be digitised. So the team-based structure of archival work including digital archives is similar to the QDL project that was described by Susannah, therefore team work and enough funding are two important drivers of archival work and can help to organise the archivist's role.

Unique materials according to Victoria and Anthony are becoming less of a thing in modern age, however, traditional archivists are more concerned with unique materials. Anthony mentioned an interesting term called 'grey literature', which is published materials that sits somewhere between an archive item and a library item, such as annual reports, promotional leaflets or brochure and such materials are not considered unique materials. In fact, the WT collections span 1000 years which include both unique and non-unique materials.

On the other hand, Mahendra Mahey, British Library Labs Project Manager, and from his experience of working with other archivists, is surprised that many archivists do not actually care who uses archival materials and his opinion fits well with the literature. His point view come from the fact that he works with all thing digital within the BL and therefore it is his role to promote the digital collections primarily to researchers and other users. So according to him, a lot of the emphasis has

¹³ Qatar Digital Library QDL: is a new, bilingual online portal to digitised BL collections relating to Gulf history and Arabic science (<https://www.qdl.qa/en>)

been given to the preservation and not the use, and this statement coincides with the journal articles like Walton (2017) and Rhee (2015). Generally for Mahendra, the natural tendency for an archivist is to focus on unique materials.

5.2.2 Scholarly Communication

The question posed here in regards to whether archivists are involved in scholarly communication to engage users. The literature describe scholarly communication in relation to the archival profession as an important aspect of the profession and that archivists should be leaders in scholarly communication due to the demands of digital archive (Sugimoto et al., 2014) and (Sauer, 2009). According to Sauer (2009) time is limited in comparison to the activities that an archivist had to accomplish in short duration, and therefore they don't have time for scholarly work such as writing a peer-reviewed academic article like researchers do.

The interviewees agreed that it is important to contribute in writing of some sort but not necessarily writing academic articles that include citations to other relevant journal articles. Information sharing can be through writing blogs on their institutional websites, or in the case of Nancy Charles, delivering short lectures within events to promote awareness of specific fond of collections is very useful for researchers, and such activities indeed increase the profile of the RAS. While Richard Temple, Victoria Sloyan and Anthony Day do not see it as essential activity to write academic articles rather what is essential is to promote the collections through other activities like writing blogs and using social media and meeting with researchers in person. According to Anthony, it is not part of the job description to write articles but it is expected, so we do write special articles, he said, on specific collections, but not like the peer-reviewed articles as researchers do.

It is necessary to note here that some of the interviewees didn't have a comprehensive view on what scholarly communication means, so their common answers to raise the profile of their archival institutions is to use web blogs and to have a Twitter presence. Perhaps the archivists thought that scholarly communication is something that needs to be accomplished by researchers or academic people more than a task that undertaken by an archivist. According to Sarah Broadhurst said that her colleagues at ZSL are engaging in scholarly communication because their largest base of users is academics and they are keen to contribute in this field.

5.2.3 Rare Manuscripts and Copyright

Copyright can be an impediment to many of the archival special collections, especially to rare manuscripts and works that is produced by scholars outside the archival institute i.e. non-staff, but also something necessary to have to protect the intellectual property of the author. Therefore, it was necessary to ask the interviewees their opinion and experience on copyright issues when it relation to rare manuscripts and non-institutional publications.

It became clear through the conducted interviews that copyright of collections is partially held by the institutional archives, and in the words of Nancy most of the collections are donated, and therefore the copyright is transferred to RAS, however, copyright became a bigger problem in relation to modern collections and it is more an issue of confidentiality than copyright. The

possession of copyright automatically carries on to the digitised materials. For Richard Temple, intellectual property laws are very important and it is important to understand such laws especially when you don't possess the copyright to the entire archive like the case of Senate House Library where Richard works.

Another issue that is connected to copyright is when the materials have never been published and therefore they have not gone out of copyright in the case of ZLS where the 19th century materials cannot be assumed they are open licenced, not until 2039. This is especially important to archives, where most materials are classified as unpublished. For ZLS collections, 9 out of 10 of copyright issues are resolved because the ancestry of authors would be pleased rather than bothered to see the work of the relatives published for the benefit of the research community and the society as a whole.

The copyright issue comes mainly from third party materials because permission has to be sought before they are digitised and published on the digital archive said Susannah Gillard from the QDL. Furthermore, many of materials that can be digitised and freely made available online come from the India Office collections that are Crown Copyright documents which possess 105,000 manuscripts alone.

When people often donate special collections over to institutional archives they are given the choice to transfer copyright to the archive, like what happens at the WT, however the RAS would prefer donations that has no copyrights attached or the copyright is fully transferred. While this is done through a donation agreement form that sets out the use of materials, the WT has a tick boxes online regarding copyright, however the WT would only make available digitised materials that the organisation hold copyright for and make available for users under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 for free use.

5.2.4 Online Catalogues

Most the institutions or organisations have a web presence but their online catalogues varies in depth and breadth, for instance, the BL, QDL, Senate House Library and the Wellcome Trust are considered to have comprehensive catalogues that are designed for online archives as well as books. Other smaller organisations such as RAS and ZSL have smaller online catalogues in the form of library management systems and mainly designed for book collections. These library management systems are outsourced and not designed based on the requirement of each institutional archive.

Although all the interviewees agree that digitisation is an important step for their organisations, but two organisations, SHL and RAS are in their initial stage of digitisations particularly RAS, while the BL and the WT are well advanced in this process. Furthermore, the interviewees have mentioned that it is important for them to utilise social media websites such as Wikipedia by writing entries about their online catalogues and adding links to relevant materials. This would increase discoverability and direct traffic to their online or digital archives.

They also have reported that it is important to put catalogue record descriptions on other online repositories, this is especially emphasised by small institutions like RAS and ZSL. Richard Temple from SHL has also referred to the usefulness of such online repositories in raising the profile of the archive. Nancy from RAS in particular has praised online repositories such as Archives Hub, Archives

Portal Europe¹⁴, but has not used the TNA Discovery¹⁵, and on the other hand, Richard mentioned AIM25, but both indicated that the objective is to raise awareness of their institutional special collections, and this is their main motivation. On the other hand, Sarah from ZSL has mentioned Open Access collaborative websites such as AHRC¹⁶, ARTUK¹⁷ and VADS¹⁸, which allows institutions to put their descriptive record information on them to reach wider audience.

5.2.5 Integrating Catalogues

MIAS looks forward to integrate the digital archive catalogue with that of the library catalogue, and thus a question was put forward to the interviewed participants in regards to this step. The interviewees were asked about their opinion on the integration of the online archive catalogue with the library catalogue. This was a technical question and the expected answers were merely to see if they are aware of certain cataloguing standards and technologies that may be useful for this purpose. ZSL and RAS do not have an online catalogue dedicated to their digital collections, and therefore they use an outsource library catalogue hosted by external IT companies. Nancy and her team from the RAS, are considering to have a digital repository for archival purpose, as they are currently using Archives Hub as an external repository for the record descriptions. There is the issue of storage of course, which will be covered in a separate section.

On the other hand, the British Library Labs and BL/QDL foundation partnership use a bespoke online catalogues designed by IT and database companies. All the catalogues are integrated and accessed from a main catalogue called 'Explore' (<http://explore.bl.uk/>), which is an amalgamation of several catalogues. The system is known as 'Aleph', while QDL has a separate domain name: (<https://www.qdl.qa/en>). Mahendra from BL Labs indicated to a problem with BL Explore catalogue, is that it does not harvest all the rich descriptive information of the collections which causes information lose. Some collections have specific fields that are not available on BL Explore catalogue. The BL/QDL has its own online archival catalogue populated by the descriptions based on the ISAD(G) standards and their own internal guidelines. The BL/QDL online catalogue also appears on BL Explore catalogue but it is separate from it, despite Explore is the main online catalogue.

Interestingly, Richard from SHL has pointed out to the Dublin Core standards as the standard that combines an archival catalogue with a library catalogue; SHL are in the early stages of this integration process and currently looking at combining different datasets. The integration of the online catalogues is a sought after step but it is not a straightforward process due to the difference in metadata says Sarah from ZSL. Furthermore, the WT has two separate online catalogues, but one feeds into the other, one is called CALM for cataloguing archival record descriptions that gets

¹⁴ Archives Portal Europe: provides access to information on archival materials held at archival institutions in different European countries. <https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/>

¹⁵ The National Archives, Discovery, is the official archive of the UK government and also holds descriptive information of more than 2,500 archives in the UK. <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

¹⁶ AHRC: Arts & Humanities Research Council, <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/about/policies/openaccess/>

¹⁷ ARTUK: Art UK provides a public catalogue repository of over 220,000 of artworks. <https://artuk.org/>

¹⁸ The Visual Arts Data Service is a free online resource for visual art collections comprising over 140,000 images. <https://www.vads.ac.uk/>

harvested into SERA online catalogue that is used for library books, icons and other physical resources.

5.2.6 Descriptive information and metadata standards

The interviewees were asked two questions; one in relation to archival description standards and the other in relation to metadata fields of elements.

5.2.6.1 ISAD(G)

Generally when it comes to information retrieval, users tend to search in a simple Google-like search terms, and according to interviewees this will not retrieve the wanted records, because whichever archive uses the ISAD(G) standard, which is a multilevel description, may . Users may not realise that digital archives are designed in a hierarchal elements. These elements are repeated to increase findability says Susannah (QDL). Nancy has stated that Archives Hub makes it easier for the archivist as well as the researcher to find the materials they are looking for and she finds it useful.

Still on the ISAD(G) topic, Richard from SHL classified metadata into digital and non-digital archives. The non-digital metadata are governed by ISAD(G) standard and the most important fields are scope and content, title, reference number, data. SHL implemented a database called ADLIB for archival record description. The most important field in his opinion that is used to retrieve non-digital materials is scope and content. He finds ISAD(G) standard very useful in terms of cross searching and it provide a structure for archivists and considers it self-explanatory for users and researchers. He thinks it is important for archivists to do research because it helps them understand how to use finding aids and to find out how efficient the descriptive information as users rather than creators. He also said that, as archivists and creators of records, we need to think of descriptive information all the time and how they can be evolved. A way to combine both data is by using standards like Dublin Core; this is to join up fields that include MARC codes and ISAD(G) descriptions on one portal and on one website to enable findability.

It is obvious from the literature review that archival institutions depends on external funding for digitisation and online archive development, thus smaller and less funded organisations like ZSL and RAS were not able to develop their own fully equipped digital archives and therefore they are still in their infancy as described by Sarah Broadhurst and Nancy Charles. The ZSL online catalogue for instance, does not encompass a digital archive, in fact it is a library system and not ideal to hold digitised archival collections, and the reason is that it does not enable EAD and rich metadata, which is an important cornerstone for any digital archive. As for RAS, Nancy referred to Dr Jenny Bunn, an academic in the Department of Information Studies, UCL who does debates on standardisation of archival descriptions¹⁹. Standardisation is indeed a worthy thing to be raised every now and then. It is noteworthy to say that online archival discovery websites certainly are great means for Archivists to use when they their organisations or institutions do not have their standalone digital archive systems.

¹⁹ Bunn, J (2016) *Archival description and automation: a brief history of going digital*, Archives and Records, Vol. 37 (1), pp. 65-78. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2016.1145577>

5.2.6.2 Metadata

The Archives Hub, AIM25 along with other resource discovery repositories have helped archivists to list their archival collection descriptive information based on the metadata elements mandated by these repositories. The interviewees are aware how imperative metadata elements are for collection identification. Having said that, the archival collections vary and therefore, each material may need more or less metadata to help users identify and retrieve the right records. In addition, it depends on users understanding of what metadata is and what field(s) would be important to them, stated Mahendra. He adds by saying that the obvious elements for identification of digital materials would be the *title, description, date of publication, place of publication*, but again it depends on each and every collection, and still there are complications and issues around metadata fields and standards. Although that he didn't mention these impediments (.. and I didn't ask), but we can identify some of the issues mentioned in the literature regarding computerised archival description and how to interpret and understand the nature of metadata for digital archival purposes.

Mahendra is precise in relation to the issue in choosing the metadata fields, because we find Richard Temple, mentioning other fields like *reference number, description, and data copyright* as very important metadata elements for digital archives and considers metadata as very, very important and without it users cannot find and retrieve materials. In fact, the British Library uses a digital management system different than the one used by archivists at Senate House Library and designed by two different IT companies. The Digital Archive Management system or DAM used by SHL, which is a database to store digitised materials, while the system designed for the British Library is a harvest-based library management system comprises of over 70 different catalogues and each would use different metadata standards, thus we can understand the aforementioned expert opinions. Furthermore, Mahendra illustrated the generation of metadata and how they evolved with an example:

"[There was a project to digitise] book covers and the metadata standards for this collection were developed organically and through working with other groups around the world. I believe a standard was developed in time, and at that time, in the early days there was no standards that I am aware of, it was around the 1990s - what I do know now is that the standards have evolved for this collection in question."

BL/QDL on the other hand, adds one single metadata to foliate the digitised materials as part of their in-house guidelines which is not included in the ISAD(G) and stored on the BL own servers. The foliation is a number that is added to identify the sequence of the digitised pages. The WT has two reference numbers, one points to the record on the online catalogue and the other is a unique identifier generated by the system to refer to each and every photograph. These two references constitute part of the metadata for each digitised materials on the online catalogue.

5.2.7 Storage of digital materials

Archivists who work in small institutions or organisations encounter an obstacle of electronic storage of their digitised materials, especially materials that are considered unique such as rare manuscripts. The issue ranges from cost, security and copyright of materials. The interviewees were asked two separate questions, one in relation to storage of digital materials and their electronic format, and

the other is around cloud computing. These issues are not solely the concern of archivists, but of all those responsible for managing electronic records.

Large organisations like the BL, the WT, and SHL use their own bespoke digital library systems and stored on either local or remote servers, except for WT which uses a service called Preservica²⁰. The WT stores digital materials on digital asset management system and uses a web technology called GOOBI which processes digital materials to get into Preservica. For the Trust, not all materials that have been digitised are released online.

The systems at BL were developed and designed for long-term digital storage of archival storage, but didn't fully recognise the user-experience aspect in terms of ease of retrievals. The collections are replicated in four locations for security purposes. Other collections are stored on DVDs and CDs and other media types and so they are not accessible online. We can understand that the BL and the SHL do not employ outsource cloud computing storage for the reasons described above.

Moreover, Richard acknowledges the issues of electronic storage to small organisations but it is not an issue for SHL where he works. Although he finds online depositories very useful for archival descriptive information but they are not made for archival storage. Therefore having an in-house storage device is imperative for every institutional archive whether small or large. So he is very much in favour of having a digital copy of the collections that are stored on outsource storage somewhere. Furthermore, and since QDL/BL partnership foundation is part of the British Library, it too uses local storage mechanisms.

As for the small organisations like RAS and ZSL, have limited resources although RAS in particular is considering to use cloud computing technology, and in the meantime their selected digitised materials are displayed on external collaborative websites, such as AHRC in case of ZSL, and descriptive information on Archives Hub for RAS. ZSL is using an outsourced company to manage the online catalogue but not designed for digital archives purpose. As a result, ZSL only stores limited number of digitised materials on this catalogue, but do not include rich metadata elements that incorporate EAD for instance.

5.2.8 User Accessibility to Digital Archives

The interviewed Archivists considered the online websites that provide electronic access to collection level descriptions of archives like Archives Hub, AIM25, etc. as a valuable instrument for material accessibility and a pointer to their physical archives. Furthermore, all the interviewees have affirmed their use of social media websites as a tool to raising the profile of the archives and to encourage research and to promote participation among the research community.

The relationship between the number of digitised collections and their copyright is directly proportional, that is the more the material is openly licenced the archivist can put more effort in digitisation and place them on online viewers for free access and as a consequence increases accessibility. Sometimes the digitised pages of a manuscript are held by the institute that carried out the processes of digitisation while the copyright, if it apply, might be held by the archive that owns the manuscripts. Creative Commons Licences (CCs) have solved many of accessibility issues which

²⁰ Preservica is an electronic storage software that provides long-term digital preservation of digital materials

are used by the Wellcome Trust online catalogue. Furthermore, Richard from SHL library also referred to CCs and said, "Opening up access and getting round copyright barriers help to improve users' ability to find what they are searching for on digital archives."

Navigating online catalogues makes more sense to archivists because they have created them and perhaps went through structured training, but for users and young researchers may not know how they work, especially when the culture of searching is still imposed by the basic keywords 'Google' search. Users do not realise, says Victoria from the WT; that records have a hierarchy that users need to browse; also users do not realise how the archive is presented, and the digital archive is one aspect of it. The WT have something called the 'Universal Viewer'²¹, replacing the former Wellcome Player, enabling users to click through all digitised content.

According to Nancy, one of the drivers for user accessibility to digital archives is to put more digitised materials on it, however, since descriptive information is time consuming the process tend to be slow. She expressed it in the phrase that says, 'less product, more process', which is a system used by archivists to cataloguing archives. Archivists would prefer to write comprehensive descriptions for each and every single collection in the archive but this would require more staff and perhaps voluntary staff too. However, lack of money is an impediment for archives like RAS and ZSL therefore we find RAS for instance use external sponsor i.e. Cambridge University Library (CUL) which is well-equipped to carry out the digitisation process of 3 of its rare manuscripts and placing them on the CLU online archive with reference to RAS. This step may be useful for MIAS digital collections, in that they can collaborate with CLU or other suchlike academic libraries to facilitate digitisation and raise the profile of MIAS digital archive.

Richard from SHL uses Wikipedia entry to reach out to audience by adding links on Senate House Library page on Wikipedia, the library is part of a complex University. Apart from increasing user accessibility, it is a way to raise the profile of the archival collections. So for such archival institutions user interfaces (UI) are not just the means for users to gain access to digitised materials or descriptive information of physical archives, but the utilising web technologies are also a way of user awareness of their archives such as the use of blogs and posts on social media. Other things that would increase user accessibility, according to Richard, is reducing the electronic size of the PDF files to enable to use of download, and making sure that the text is very legible and readable.

In my opinion, it is needless to say that good online archives attract researchers from other countries and especially when users are allowed to participate with their knowledge to enrich the digitised collections; therefore the more the accessibility to the collections, the better research and digital scholarship. On the other hand, Susannah from QDL has mentioned that users can download PDFs of all the documents but with CCs restrictions, as all the digitised materials are for research purposes and not for commercial, this is in terms of accessibility, but the QDL website is not a participatory website like social media she adds.

5.2.9 User Feedback and Productivity Management

User feedback is of vital importance for the continuous development of online archives and it is a way of collecting user's opinion on the performance of the designed systems. Besides the online

²¹ Universal Viewer is a software tool developed by Digirati to enable users to view, sort and enhance accessibility to digitised materials. <https://universalviewer.io/>

questionnaire that I have utilised to collect data from users of MIAS digital archive, I thought to include three interview questions on user feedback, evaluating services, and productivity measurement so to enrich my understanding of the user experience of digital archives and online catalogues. The targeted question drew several important answers from the archivists. The answers were oriented on user experience in general including productivity measurement of archival institutions. The professional archivists including project manager, Mahendra Mahey provided rich answers containing interesting terminologies. We will begin by analysing user's feedback.

5.2.9.1 Feedback

Mahey acknowledged that there are two problems concerning the usability of the online catalogue, one is insufficient or patchy metadata or it is not always consistent, the second problem is what he called expectation management, because most users expect that all BL collections are digitised, while only 3 to 4% are in fact have been digitised. Another issue that tend to be shared among all online archives is the size of downloadable files, and thus QDL have segmented the digitised manuscripts into pages and on each page there is a foliation mark to indicate order of pages while most of the digitised materials are correspondences. Richard Temple on the other hand do receive feedback from users of the archive via email and he shares them among the staff, while other technical concerns are sent to the technical people or those who are responsible for enriching the digital records with descriptive information. People tend to enquire by email said Sarah from ZSL and their feedback shows satisfaction of the archives that are described on the online catalogue and other images placed on external discovery websites.

Perhaps users tend not to have high expectation of digital collections of small institutional archives, and this is relevant to RAS; but according to Nancy, users would like to see more materials put online. While it is an issue to get everything digitised, but at least the materials descriptive information are progressively put online. In like of RAS, QDL besides communications by email, user feedback are harvested from online survey which is used by the company that designed and developed the website. As a result of the feedback, the company introduced a feature to download images in PDFs while before users can only view the image online.

5.2.9.2 Evaluation

Emulating ones service is vital for the reputation of any organisation because it helps archivist to judge the degree of knowledge have been gained from online catalogues. The British Library, the Wellcome Trust and BL/QDL foundation employee external companies to do an independent evaluation of the online catalogues and the services provided. The evaluation is based on the user-experience of the online catalogues. One of the things that people asked the BL about is why it doesn't have APIs for the digitised collections. Instead, BL have put over 1 million images on Flickr Commons which has an API facility. Large organisations i.e. the WT, SHL and the QDL project tend to use Google Analytics to evaluate quantitative and qualitative data that come from users and such application software is useful for SHL says Richard Temple. It is very useful thing to know, e.g. how many users are redirected from a Wikipedia entry, and Google analytics can provide clear evidence that more and more researchers are coming from Wikipedia, and therefore it is worth spending time on putting data on Wikipedia.

The interviewees from the small organisations didn't mention Google Analytic as an application for evaluating services, but instead they deploy online questionnaire as a technique for data collection. Evaluation would also come via researchers responses on blogposts says Nancy from RAS. They have also said that the digital materials are not mature or user friendly and they would like to see something better, perhaps re-structure of online catalogue, but funding is an obstacle to improvement for most small institutional archives.

5.2.9.3 Productivity Measurement

Many users search for archival materials through websites and this takes place without the knowledge of the archivists, so productivity or performance measurement helps archivists to take initiatives to improve institutional services based on concrete outcomes. It also enables archivists understand how to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of online catalogues so they become more capable to suggest more effective websites and increase users' satisfaction.

For the interviewees such technical assessments are implemented by dedicated people and only large organisations can utilise Web analytics like Comscore.com and Altmetric.com to measure user actions and understand some aspects of user behaviour, and look at blogposts to measure statistics and to know users' visits. However, according to Richard Temple archivists cannot guarantee that digital materials for instance will be used because research trends change and the decisions that archivists make whether to keep archives do not depend on usability of archival collections at SHL, he also adds, we divide the archives into sections which helps in the evaluation process.

Sarah and her ZSL colleagues use the old school of counting the number of enquires, and this would mean it measure performance; however, such task is carried out by the web team at ZSL may have used Google Analytics to improve user satisfaction." On the other hand, Susannah Gillard and her online cataloguing team have monthly targets to catalogue 30,000 images and that would include all the processes from selection and preparation materials for digitisation. The archivists from small archives that have been interviewed often set targets for themselves as part of measurement of their performance and do not use special application software due to several reasons, like technical skills, time and money.

PART SIX

6 PRÉCIS OF COMPARATIVE STUDY AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 Précis Comparative Study

After analysing and describing the respondents and participants' results of both, the online questionnaire and the interviews respectively, it has been establish necessary to take a multidisciplinary approach, although not thorough, to do a comparative study. The approach is find out defects or gaps in the MIAS digital archive, and to help realise the improvement based on the knowledge acquired from the survey method. The closest archival institutions to MIAS are ZSL and RAS but there will be reference to the other archival institutions that have been interviewed. Furthermore, the user-experience aspect will be drawn from the results gained from the MIAS digital archive users and the analysed interviews. The brief comparative study will be using a framework interview questions as well as the technical aspect of the online catalogues of these archives. The framework consists of the following guidelines:

6.2 Evaluation Criteria of [Digital] Archives

According to the literature the essential criteria for the evaluation digital archives are usability, collection quality including metadata and description standards, service quality, and system performance efficiency. Research in digital archive evaluation still in its infancy and the question arises as why, what and how to do such evaluation and certainly it is a complex undertaking. However, since we have identified the main set of criteria and with the results of the survey questionnaire as well as the analysis of the interviews undertaken I am more capable to carry out this task. Before all, the ultimate goal of the evaluation is to assess user needs and the general users' satisfaction. The criteria that will be used to evaluate MIAS digital archive are:

- archival description standards and metadata
- user-computer interface, online catalogues, digital archives
- commercial cloud – online storage
- accessibility to materials and documents
- social media
- archives discovery websites

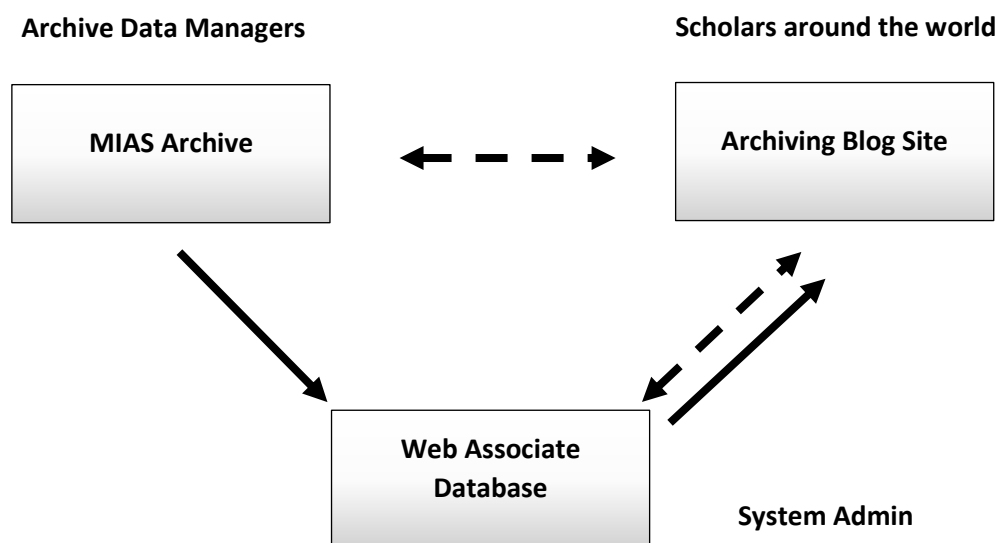
To determine the quality of finding aids, sometimes called collection listing, finding aids describe the background of a collection, how and when it was formed, and how the archive acquired it, if through donation or other means²². Digital collections in most archival institutions only reflect a portion of the actual physical materials held by archives.

²² <https://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/findingandevaluating>

6.3 MIAS Archive – System Overview²³

The MIAS online archive was designed and implemented using collection management system software called FileMaker Pro relational Database, which is a combination of file or files made up of 4 tables, and each table consists of records and each record in turn consists of several fields. It integrates a database engine with a graphical user interface (GUI) and security features, and the database is accessible via a username and password.

The system comprises of three sets, archive data managers who maintain the master online archive and use comments, particularly from scholars, and updates the content of the records. The conceptual framework was designed and volunteer-run by MIAS society based on a custom database. It mainly designed to hold descriptive information of records that only refers to manuscripts that are controlled by the selection criteria mentioned in Part Two of this dissertation.



Conceptual framework for MIAS digital archive project

The above framework attempts to illustrate the relationship between people, content and technologies. At present the system is designed to allow non-members to access catalogue records but will not allow users to write comments unless they have full rights via registered credentials supplied by the system administrator(s). This is an indication that the system is partially open access, which limits user contribution.

What we really want is a system that would allow members and non-members alike to contribute to the scholarly communication as well as be able to contact each other via the user interface. So a feature to browse for people is a valuable source of information. We also need to a feature which gets digital content to the user or the user to the content.

²³ As sketched out by MIAS Society

Below is a table that defines the functionality of each component.

Component	Description	Purpose
MIAS Archive (MIASA)	FileMaker Pro database on personal Mac(s) Custom font / encoding	Archive data managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain the master archive user comments from scholars (in ABS) to update the archive
Web Accessible Database (WADB)	Mysql database on JMIAS server Unicode	System Administrators: Handle periodic 'batch' updates to WADB from MIASA (XML exported from MIASA, re-encoded to Unicode, loaded into MySQL dB)
Archive Blog Site (ABS)	WordPress (PHP/Mysql) on JMIAS server Unicode: 2 components of WordPress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHP presenting 'post' content to visitors (post content being generated dynamically by SQL calls back to WADB) its own Mysql database of posts, comments, etc (updated with comments by users; updated with 'dummy posts' by system admin) 	Scholars around the world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> view archive via blog posts enter their own expert comments Archive Data Managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond to comments (with comments) act upon comments by updating MIASA (see above) System Administrators maintain 1:1 relation between WADB and the 'dummy posts' in the Mysql layer of WordPress

FileMaker uses a system of 'layout' and fields are incorporated in each layout. It is supposedly more user-friendly than its rival MS Access. The good thing is that databases are already created as templates which mean you do not have to invent the wheel, but the question posed here, is it meant for digital archives? We will come to this question at a later stage.

Because the system is 'homegrown' that is designed by an individual who may or may not know descriptive standards like ISAD(G), EAD, or other digital format like MARC and Dublin Core as well as digital metadata that are indeed paramount to both, book catalogue and archival catalogue. As a result, the data is not being standardised.

6.3.1 Using the online Catalogue

The online catalogue is accessible via two interfaces; one is designed for external users which is a summary of the findings of the archival project, accessible via the Society's website, which can be called the basic catalogue. The other is more detailed searchable online database accessible only by members of the Society. The basic catalogue is based on an interactive PDF page with a clickable hyperlink 'CATALOGUE OF IBN 'ARABI'S WORK' that leads to the 'Main Menu' of the catalogue.

**MIAS ARCHIVE REPORT:
CATALOGUE OF IBN 'ARABI'S
WORKS**

(Click blue text to view)

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society
THE ISLAMIC
MANUSCRIPT
SOCIETY

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society web site: <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/index.html>
MIAS Archive Project: library@ibnarabisociety.org
MIAS UK: info.uk@ibnarabisociety.org P.O. Box 892, Oxford, OX2 7DL, UK +44 1865 511963
MIAS USA: info.usa@ibnarabisociety.org P.O. Box 45, Berkeley, CA 94701-0045, USA

Main Menu

- Ibn 'Arabi's Works - Overview p. 2
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- Works Classified as "VERIFIED A" p. 13
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- Works Classified as "EXTRACT" p. 21
- Works Classified as "DUPLICATE" p. 23
- Works Classified as "NOT IA" p. 25
- Cover Page p. 28

Alphabetical List of Works

Alphabetically arranged master list of titles, including all works under every classification (as described under Classification in Overview):

- A = Verified A
- B = Verified B
- P = Probable
- U = Unverified
- X = Extract
- D = Duplicate
- N = Not by Ibn 'Arabi

RG. No.	Title	Arabic	Classification
150		نصوص الحكم	A
2	K. al-'Abādīla	كتاب العبادلة	A
6	K. al-Adhkar	كتاب الأذكار	U
5.1	Ad'iyat al-shaykh al-akbar	أدعية الشيخ الأكبر	D
13	R. al-Aḥadiyya	رسالة في الأحدية	N
16	Alḥwāl al-anbiyā'	أحوال الأنبياء	X
9	K. al-Ajwiba	كتاب الأجوبة	B
10	K. al-Ajwiba	كتاب الأجوبة	U
25	K. al-Ilfiyya	كتاب الألفية	N
26	K. al-Ilf wa huwa kitāb al-aḥadiyya	كتاب الألف وهو كتاب الأحدية	A
28	K. al-Amr al-muḥkam	كتاب الأمر المحكم	A
30	K. 'Anqā' muḥrib	كتاب عنقاء مغرب	A
33	R. al-Anwār (K. Asrār al-khalwa)	رسالة الأنوار (كتاب أسرار الخلوة)	A

The summary of findings []: http://archive.ibnarabisociety.org/archive_reports/cover.pdf

The menu contains an overview of Ibn 'Arabi works which are verified and categorised under the following groups: Verified (A), Verified (B), Probable (P), Unverified (U), Extract (E), Duplicates (D), and Not by Ibn 'Arabi (N).

6.3.2 The Actual Digital Archive

The 5 tables that MIAS Archive consists of are: Works, Manuscripts, Collections, Printed Works, and Papers. These 5 navigation tools are listed on a sidebar which include a Quick Search by Title only, allowing users to search only by title and the retrieved record will indicate the type of record whether Works, Manuscripts, Collections, Printed Works, or Papers. Sometimes it indicates more than one type depending on the keywords in the title.

Alternatively, each type has two retrieval possibilities, Query-by-example and List all (titles) and the latter would pull all records under each type, even though someone still can search within each type in the search boxes above the Query-by-example. In turn Query-by-example allows users to search using SQL standard commands such as SELECT command to extract data from the MIAS Archive database.

MIAS Archive managers suggest that users start searching using the List All (titles) under Works (R.G.) type which will retrieve all the works of Ibn 'Arabi in the order of the reference system (RG) that already set by Othman Yahya (mentioned in Part Two: The Birth of the Archive), in which each separate work is given a unique RG classification number to identify it from other work and so on.

One of the purpose of the archive is to be a door for scholarly consultation, that's allowing academic users to write comments in forms of feedback to affirm or otherwise the authenticity or verification of collections.

6.3.3 MIAS Archival Description

The developers of the archive has devised their own archival standard description primary based on Othman Yaha reference (RG) along with some more fields an indication to its inhomogeneous structure to the ISAD(G) standard and the specialised metadata schema EAD. This does not enable the digital archive description to interoperability and exchange in the web environment.

6.4 Evaluation criteria

6.4.1 Archival description standards and metadata

As described and discussed in the previous chapter, archival descriptive information are becoming the framework for describing archival collections online and according to all the interviewees ISAD(G) and EAD standards are used all the archival institutions in concern. Therefore it is necessary to follow such accepted standards within the archival professional especially when digital archives is now becoming a popular mechanism for raising profile of these institutions to attract new young researchers. The good thing about the standards whether metadata elements or descriptive information in general they provide a typological structure for users to follow, and are flexible standards for archivists, because each institution including MIAS can devise their own extra elements to enrich the metadata of the collections. MIAS digital archive uses RG reference which is an internal reference used by most scholars, but perhaps new and young researchers may not understand the RG reference number that refers to Ibn 'Arabi manuscripts. Therefore it would be better to introduce another reference number to identify manuscripts beyond the RG reference for

new users and this can be an identification number – a good example would be the two reference numbers that are used by the Wellcome Trust and QDL/BL foundation mentioned chapter Five.

In contrast to the professional archivists that have been interviewed, MIAS Society do not have an archive of their own with standalone library that can be accessed any moment during recognised working hours and thus the society is fully depend on the digital archive.

6.4.2 User-computer interface, online catalogues, digital archives

MIAS Digital archive has been designed using in-house initiative based on FileMaker Pro which is a database management tool suitable for record descriptions. According to the respondents' feedback, most users are happy with the user interface and it is easy to understand. It does fit for purpose and in a way similar to the ZSL online catalogue but the latter does not incorporate digital archives, or in another word, was not designed for digital archival collections.

6.4.3 Commercial Cloud – online storage

An increasing number of organisations are using cloud computing to create and store digital records. To ensure effective safe storage and findability, archives need to observe metadata standards. There are concerns in regards to security of such cloud computing technology, however, there are well-known trusted outsource IT companies that provide secure service for online storage and online catalogue designed particularly for digital archives such as Preservica.com; which provide a benefit for archives, saving, time and money by combing electronic preservation and accessibility in one web application. Furthermore, archiving in the cloud must follow certain characteristics, this is identified through a layered model and each layer of this model provides a particular service such as software, platform and infrastructure. As for archiving systems, this can be illustrated by a two-layered model as described by (Askhoj, Sugimoto and Nagamori, 2011) and (Sugimoto, 2007). The bottom is the platform layer which represents a trusted digital cloud repository. The top is the software layer which represents applications such as office software using the repository in the bottom layer.

According to Johnstone (2017) the cost of digital storage is continuing to drop making more companies to consider moving from paper storage to digital storage and the attracting thing in digital storage is the 24/7 access and it is continually being improved and updated. But the dark side of digital storage is software compatibility which means more side costs. There is a new web culture called cloud-based emails where email services like Gmail and Microsoft Office 365, which are familiar vendors with an exceptional performance that can provide online cloud storage for digitised rare manuscripts or documents in general but there are some security risks involve (Collins, 2017).

Archivists are aware that they cannot depend wholly on cloud computing for storage without taking the necessary pre-caution to store the same copies of the digitised collections on a local storage device as a backup mechanism. There are risks with cloud computing not just the risk of losing of data if the cloud goes bust but also digital collection copyright especially when the archival institution does not hold the copyright of their collections.

One cannot object to the fact that there are advantages of digital archives based on third party, external storage cloud computing. For instance Zhou & Huang (2013) esserts that there are several benefits for digital archives based on aspects like, reliable operation, reduced maintenance fee, wide scope of information resources sharing, abundant terminal equipments like PDA, smartphones, etc.

these aspects would increase digital archives efficiency, allowing users to access digitised materials reducing the process of sending emails to archivists and librarians to obtain the needed resources.

6.4.4 Accessibility to materials and documents

According to the literature and as well as BL Labs project manager, M. Mahy, there is a lot of emphasis on preservation of rare manuscripts than providing user accessibility. So archivists need to balance out the relationship between digital preservation and accessibility; however, the copyright issues can be an impediment to this procedure. Several archival institutions are benefiting from the Creative Commons licencing (CC) technology that help legally share the scholarly literature that are produced by Society to support to Open Access. It is understandable that many rare manuscripts cannot be shared digitally on archival institutions especially when the copyright holder is located outside the UK, such as the case of Ibn 'Arabi related manuscripts. However, the issue of copyright cannot be a deterrent for digital archives to write thorough descriptive information and also indicate how they can be accessible. Providing a link to a foreign source such as a library that hold the original manuscripts is good but is not good enough if the electronic source is written in the native language of that country.

6.4.5 Social media

Even if the digital archive is well designed and usability has been well addressed, archivists should not forget about the social media aspect of the internet to raise the profile of their archives and to promote usability of their digital archives. The interviewed archives have utilised social media technologies to raise the profile of their physical archive as well as the digital archive presence on the internet. The British Library for instance uses Flickr photo management website as a placeholder for their digitised images, photographs under CC licenses. Weblogs are also being used by these archives and all the archivists (BL, WT, RAS, ZSL) have emphasised on the importance of blogs as a means to share information of their collections through writing posts when there is a need for that.

Another social media websites that are being used by these archives are Twitter and Facebook and they are useful to redirect users to the online catalogue/digital archives. They are also useful for archivist-researcher instant interaction and occasionally better than emails.

In addition to the above new media, the interviewed archives created entries on the free online encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, to redirect researchers. Wikipedia is becoming among the most visited websites according to alexa.com²⁴. Wikipedia has definitely created a force of enthusiasts within the scholarly community.

On the other hand, if we see MIAS society, there is no mention of any of these social media websites on the MIAS digital archive which is a draw back. We need to increase awareness among the research community of important archives and can benefit research and directing the user to the

²⁴ Alexa.com founded in 1996 web analytics services: (<http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/wikipedia.org>)

archives is a goal of archivists. It is necessary to say here that Ibn 'Arabi society manages a Facebook group page but it is not used to draw attention to the digital archive and the resources available on it and I believe this needs to change.

6.4.6 Archives discovery websites

The interviewed archivists expressed their appreciation of third party websites provide a medium to list their archival descriptive information and again this would increase findability of collections and raise the profile of such archives. Archive discovery websites vary in design but in general they provide the same service, and it is holding the record descriptions of institutional archives in the UK such as TNA discovery, AIM25, Archives Hub, etc. Some other websites have more capabilities to allow archives to upload their digital collections such as AHRC, ARTUK, VADs, Archives portal Europe, etc.

In contrast, we find that MIAS Society do not use these websites to declare their digitised collections. In actual fact, such online tools are very useful to bring new users to the digital archive and may even benefit scholarly communication by increasing user contribution and participation in Ibn 'Arabi studies. Currently it is drawback among all archives that do not utilise such tools let alone MIAS archive.

PART SEVEN

7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Recommendations

In this section there will be some measures that need to be taken into account for the development of the current MIAS digital archive project. These measures will be expressed in form of recommendations in two dimensions, one of which needs to be implemented by the MIAS society and the other is external in relation to user participating and collaborative work. The recommendations will be based on from the previous findings and in relation to the literature review. It is important to ensure that the digital archive is discoverable as possible and whether the platform meets user's needs and this can only be done through continuous development based on the user's feedback.

7.1.1 Archival Descriptive Information Standards

The MIAS digital archive has been designed using an in-house descriptive information based more or less on the classification scheme devised by a Syrian librarian in 1964 and has become the standard reference to the records, and part of the record description. This descriptive information needs to be looked at in comparison to other internationally agreed digital archival description standards. By recognising these internationally accepted standards whether for traditional or electronic archives will help to make research easier for researchers; so why are archival standards necessary?

Archivists believe that archives are unique and since that's so, they need to have unique descriptive information, furthermore archivists would like to facilitate use of their archives online thus an international archival description standard was approved in late 90s by the International Council on Archives and was later revised to accommodate the digital age.

The ISAD(G) gained rapid acceptance among British archivists and can be used along internal in-house guidelines thus it is general. Furthermore EAD, an international standard based on ISAD(G) and written in XML format, has been developed to encode finding aids for online catalogues use using XML text editor to create Document Type Definition (DTD). Finding aids on the other hand are indexes or guides that are created by archival repositories to facilitate information about specific collections. For instance, the Archives Hub stores all its archival descriptions in EAD format because it is ideal for sharing electronic information of archival collections and archivists do not need to make any effort to create their own descriptive elements.

It is highly recommended therefore, to follow the ISAD(G) and EAD archival standards on MIAS digital archive to facilitate usability and accessibility among the research community. As we know that knowledge cannot be acquired correctly unless there is an element of understandability. The online respondents were asked about their perception of the manuscripts descriptive information on MIAS archive, and all the 19 respondents did not mention ISAD(G) or EAD standards and generally they have expressed their satisfaction with the current descriptive elements, and although this is the case, but there were some important feedback made by the users. Users of the archive would like to see new fields in each record such as detailed scope and content and must be up to date. They also would like to see an indication whether or not the digitised manuscripts are critically edited,

published or not and who is involved in the research. Some fields within the records require precision.

7.1.1.1 *Scope and content expressions*

Scope and content is an important element which consists of several fields to help users make sense of digital records and create an effective access point. The scope and content fields need to be up to date and written clearly to enable findability of records. The expression is mandatory and provides an in-depth clear description of the material and archivists should use their discretion to add documents or media that relate to materials or can benefit the scholarly research. Other important elements are (title, held at, date, creator, extent, language, level of description) where the level of description can be a fond, sub-fond, series, file where file is the smallest level, where a fond is the highest level of the collections that belong to one creator.

Furthermore, an important suggestion came from the online questionnaire regarding descriptive information elements. To include more descriptive elements so that to indicate if the digitised manuscripts have been critically edited, and if have been published or not. Also, to have an interactive content for each record such as to make sure hyperlinks are active, and to examine some fields for consistency, accuracy and precision for each electronic record.

7.1.2 *Archive discovery tools*

To increase discoverability of Ibn 'Arabi digital archive it is essential to put the manuscripts descriptive information on online discovery tools. This step would raise the profile of the MIAS archive and lead to user participation and contribution in the research. Archives Hub, for instance, currently represents nearly 300 institutions in the UK; it is an effective way to discover unique and often little-known resources. Any UK archive that has primary resources can be on the Archives Hub and described to archival standards.

The current web technology tools have enabled highly navigated websites to be created and many standard online archives catalogues are available to use with a certain amount of annual charge, such as, Capterra, Soutron and others. Materials of interests can be found through browsing alone. It is also important to allow users to contribute through writing comments on each record, and by suggesting new ideas or/and to write blogs and add tags to other records and cross-reference and links. This helps to harvest user-generated content that can be used later towards editing manuscripts and to write critical editions. The Qatar Digital Library, for instance, has a user-friendly website that allows users to discover the structure of the archive and contextual information found within the catalogue's hierarchy although does not allow users to contribute by commenting on each record or add tags to other information and identify other records.

From the conducted interviews, the archivists has praised the benefit of using social media websites like Twitter, Facebook, and Wikipedia to raise awareness and increase the profile of their digital archives. They are all external free tools providing information and links to the online catalogue but remain separate entities. For archives with regular users it is paramount to capture some of their knowledge of the digital collections, particularly users who are highly qualified in the field who have accumulated knowledge of Ibn 'Arabi's writings; this helps to identify if the work or sections of work attributed to him didn't go through changes or manipulations. For instance, an expert in Ibn 'Arabi's

studies said in regards to accessibility, it is necessary “[to see] sample of images especially notes of Sama’²⁵ and Ijazat²⁶ for each and every manuscript”, and a University lecturer said, to see more of “codicological details of the digitised manuscripts.” – As previously mentioned, the respondents’ comments are centred on the word ‘image’ of manuscripts; however, there is an impediment of copyright that would not allow open access. Two more expert respondents proposed to see edited editions of the manuscripts and publications from outside of the MIAS English journal and Western academia. Further recommendations that can be drawn from the respondents; users would like MIAS to put the digitised manuscripts online (6 respondents); the digitised of old and recent critical editions of the digitised manuscripts (1 respondent); to share the studies on ibn 'Arabi and his interpreters from non-western academia (1 respondent); an online option to request a copy of manuscripts (1 respondent). It would be useful if MIAS put an electronic undertaking form rather than sending it to the users by email, this will reduce unnecessary communication between the archivist and the researchers, especially when the user has full access to the digital archive via their membership.

7.1.3 User Experience

According to the MIAS online survey, users do appreciate the hard work that was put in the design of the archive, but that does not mean that the digital archive will not go through further development. Anticipating mistakes or gaps is expected because they were not foreseen during the initial design process and no online survey has been done in the past, therefore the current user feedback was very useful to incorporate their needs and by doing this the digital archive will gradually gain user satisfaction. The information society of today imply that users collaborate with each other and with the archivists for the benefit of all; this can only work well if MIAS adopt social media technologies and incorporate it within the digital archive and thus will increase participating and sharing of information. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter will enrich collaborative work and raise the profile of the archives. The interviewed archivists have put an emphasis on Wikipedia entries as they help researchers to find what they are looking for and in return redirect users to the archives.

7.1.3 Creative Commons (CC)

The Creative Commons licenses²⁷ help you legally share the scholarly literature that are produced by the Society to support the Open Access licensing on the one hand, and raise the profile of the Society on the other hand. CC gives institutions and individual creators a simple way to grant copyright permissions to their creative work in the ever growing information society. By adopting this step, the Society would deepen the scholarly communication and widen prospects of research in

²⁵ Sama’ : سماع Arabic term used to refer to loud reading of newly authored work in previous centuries. It helps the author to receive live comments and corrections.

²⁶ Ijaza : اجازة a term means permission which is given to selected individuals to propagate the author’s work and use it as a reference. It is like Creative Common Licences in modern time.

²⁷ <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Ibn 'Arabi studies. It will create a new era for the Society in the digital age, to grow, to develop and would encourage knowledge production and boosts creativity among members of the MIAS.

7.1.4 The principle of provenance

As an ethical rule within the archival practice, records that has the same origin should be kept together, for instance, the work that has been identified as the mere production of Ibn 'Arabi himself must be kept together in one fond, while the work that have been attributed to his students (based on the manuscripts' selection criteria) also should be processed and kept in a separate fond within the online archive. By following this order, the archivist would be able to provide a comprehensive representation of Ibn 'Arabi digital archival records. It would also help to place the records in context so that their content become comprehensible and understandable by the user.

7.2 Future Direction to MIAS Digital Archive

There is no doubt that the people who are responsible for the MIAS online archive have put a huge effort and time and as a result we have the current version of the digital archive, however, the effort should not stop at this stage. Perhaps the MIAS team need to consider consulting several online archive design companies and in which the user satisfaction must be put first. Another option is to implement another bespoke online catalogue putting into consideration the aforementioned recommendations. Managing a digital archive involves numerous issues that are not limited to the technical, legal and participation in user communications. Archivist are not expert in all fields that are paramount to the archival profession and therefore, it is recommended that either an archivist or special librarian who are involved in such projects need to consult other curators and archivists, copyright experts, IT people, digital preservation experts, scanning operators, etc. All these fields will eventually pour into the development of a 'great' design that would benefit the research community, build bridges, and makes their life easy.

7.3 Conclusions

Ibn 'Arabi digital archive is an online archive that is steadily growing and is becoming an essential resource for academic research. There are two main dimensions to digital archives, the usability on the one hand, and quality of the digitised collections on the other hand and both are essentials to the principles of digital archive design. This research was undertaken to evaluate the current online archive and answering some preliminary questions on aspects of usability, archival standards and metadata. Digitisation of rare manuscripts and other materials whether unique or not has been now acknowledged by institutional archives and special libraries as an important aspect of archival work and archives are gradually adapting to it. Ibn 'Arabi Society realised that almost a decade ago and began collecting electronic forms of Ibn 'Arabi works and as a result established the MIAS digital archive project. The digital archive will need some more development, and perhaps restructuring and incorporating archival international standards to widen participating among researchers.

Everything around us is developing and evolving and digitisation is a process that will continue to evolve too along with computer and information technology. The Society has designed the digital

archive using application software that does not fully incorporate features of digital archives, but according to users' feedback, although 20 users participated in the survey, but still the user interface is usable and effective, at least for the time being. The current MIAS archive can function as it is but will not be effective in the long run, because it lacks international standards. For the digital archive to gain acceptance the Society will need to incorporate the aforementioned recommendations and do the necessary development. Furthermore, it is also because of the demand of users, particularly researchers who asked to see a digital archive that is wholly dedicated to the Master's work that have manuscripts not accessible elsewhere view these digitised manuscripts on the MIAS online archive and be able to download them, but currently this is not possible due to intellectual property issues and restrictions made by archives and libraries that hold the materials. However, these issues are gradually being eased off under the initiative of Open Access and Creative Commons licensing.

The process of digitation and reuse of collections and even the ability to download them from digital archives depend on intellectual property, copyright and issues related to the content. This dissertation evaluated the MIAS digital archive in comparison to six other institutional archives on the state of tangible and digital archives and the accessibility of digital collections. The interviewed professional archivist provided valuable information based on their opinion, skills and experience are examples of institutional practices.

In conclusion, the Muhiyyidin Ibn 'Arabi Society, may need to conduct another online survey after adopting the recommendations that have been suggested in this dissertation. There may be the case that the Society will adopt a new online catalogue that is specially designed for digital archives and take the steps needed to raise the profile through social media tools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix [1] - Reflection on the Dissertation Process

The research dissertation has enabled me to embark on a new topic in the field of Library and Information Science and that is archive science and digital archives. It has been an overwhelming but an enjoyable experience not just because archive science and digitalisation is a new topic for me in terms of theory and practice but it is also because of the extent of literature available on this fascinating topic. The structure of the dissertation was conducive to straight forward writing style, by dividing the dissertation into parts and each part into subsections made the assignment less difficult to accomplish and more manageable.

I volunteered for about six months at the Royal Asiatic Society as a book cataloguer and it never came in mind that I would do a research on archives and digital archives, or evaluating MIAS online archive project. Of course, I have always been fascinated with history, anthropology and historic manuscripts and rare materials and the research may give me the opportunity to work in institutional archives and most especially with digital archives.

I feel that the dissertation achieved the set aims and objectives in terms of identifying ways to develop and/or improve the current MIAS digital archive project, but my technical skills are limited and therefore, I avoided evaluating the MIAS archive on the basis of software implementation and whether the application that was used to design the digital archive is fit for purpose. The FileMaker Pro is a good tool for online record database and online catalogues and has a basic search tool that does the job but it is not designed specifically accommodates digital archives. I am amazed at how positive the respondents were, as most of them were in favour of the current layout and design of the digital archive, although there were some suggestions to incorporate sample of the manuscripts within each record.

Perhaps I should have carried out more thorough qualitative research in terms of interviewing archivist from overseas and also should have kept the interviews within small institutional archives rather than interviewing archivists from large institutions like the British Library, Senate House Library, and the Wellcome Trust, as this approach would be a sensible comparison. May be I should have put more effort on technology and design to identify the most suitable software application that would suit the MIAS as an alternative to the current digital archive, however, I have indeed identified companies that are specialist in digital archiving software systems. The research has opened my appetite to learn more about digital archives and IT technologies. I read that learning programming languages such as Python. They would give the digital archivist a significant programming power. I also need to learn how to publish EAD finding aids to the web.

Appendix [2] – The dissertation proposal

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

12 May 2017

Working Title:

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) Library Catalogue: Evaluating the Society's On-line Archive Project

Introduction:

The Muhiyydin 'Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) www.ibnarabisociety.org is an international association with its headquarters based in Oxford, UK. It works to promote the understanding of Ibn 'Arabi school of thought. Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240 A.C.) is considered to be a mystical thinker and philosopher and has written over 300 works between monographs and small treatises; and many of his manuscripts survived and preserved in its original form in several libraries in the World, including the British Library. Back in 2009, MIAS has decided to undertake a project to digitally archive the works of Ibn 'Arabi based on a number of criteria mentioned in (Clark & Hirtenstein, 2012), such as works must be written by Ibn 'Arabi himself and other works up to 90 years of 'Ibn 'Arabi's death. Current archive is based on Othman Yahia (OY) 1964 classification numbers begins with the initials (RG = Répertoire Général), which is French for *general index* (Clark & Hirtenstein, 2012).

The Society's duty is to make the manuscripts digitally available on ibnarabisociety.org. The Society's online catalogue will encompass other documents besides the digitised manuscripts, such as papers, the Society's journal articles, printed works, and secondary resources, making them fully available on the same comprehensive catalogue. The aim of the Society is to make the current archive project an integral part of the entire catalogue database; and eventually an authentic and trustworthy resource for academic research.

Therefore, during this project, I plan to study and evaluate the current archive project and (catalogue) and carry out a comparative study that would involve two or more functioning on-line archives/catalogues that delivers the same services as MIAS.

So far there are 3064 works that have been catalogued and expanding. The structure of this catalogue is as follows:

1. *an online database which is the MIAS library catalogue plus archiving lists;*
2. *password access interface to the manuscript catalogue allowing members to write comments*
3. *public-access system on the MIAS website in the form of PDFs giving basic information on Ibn 'Arabi's work but with no access to the digitised manuscripts*

The overall aim of this research project is to gain a comprehensive overview of the digital archive project carried out by the MIAS and its usability among members and academic scholars worldwide. This is done in comparison to other online archives' methods and software application.

Aims:

- evaluate the current online archive project with its two parts:
 - on-line archive catalogue of the digitised manuscripts
 - on-line catalogue database of printed works and the Society's literature;
- carry out a comparative study of one or two on-line 'digital archives'

To achieve this aim, the following objectives have been identified:

Objectives:

- to determine the archival classification scheme and informational value
- investigate current trends of cloud computing to storage place for the digitised manuscripts
- looking into the mechanisms to integrate the two on-line catalogues to increase accessibility
 - Background
 - Technical infrastructure
 - Tools and technologies
- to look into ways to facilitate findability of MIAS online Catalogue on the Web to increase usability

The findings could provide a useful insight into the usefulness of the online archive as a source of knowledge to academic scholars.

Scope and definition

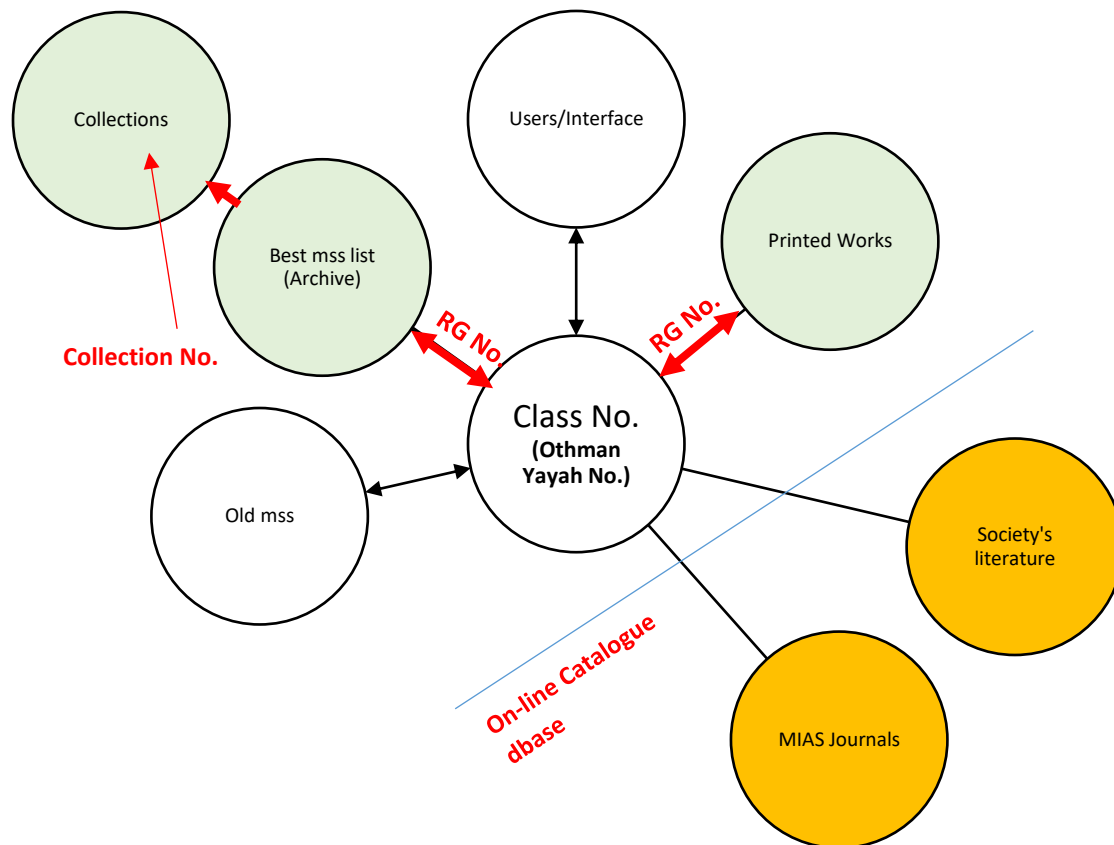
The scope of this research project will be limited to the evaluation of the actual structure of the online archive and catalogue rather than the validation of the actual manuscripts.

The Ibn 'Arabi Society's Archive project is up and running and encompasses two catalogues, one is designed to hold historic manuscripts that the Society has collated over the past decades in both, photocopies and digital forms; and the other catalogue should hold records of contemporary literature that are produced by the MIAS, ranging from papers, journal articles, newsletters, annual reports, ...etc. The Society like to combine those two catalogues through one interface.

Currently, requests are made via emails and manuscripts in particular are sent in PDF format. Therefore, it is necessary to research the ways in which these materials can be put on the internet to eliminate this cumbersome way of communication e.g. Cloud Computing solutions or open source online database technologies will be studied.

The following diagram or map illustrates how the current archive is connected. It was implemented using a rational database application called FileMaker Pro with a graphic User Interface (GUI). This

project archive will be compared with other on-line archives to identify differences. This comparative study will be conducted on two or more digital archives with similar activities. One Archive that I may use for my study is the one at the Royal Asiatic Society (<http://royalasiaticsociety.org/>) where I worked as a volunteer for a few months.



To conduct my study, I plan to extensively research the literature, and identify two more on-line archives and collect data through qualitative interview-based questionnaire. The answers gathered will be described and integrated with literature and document review. I plan to conduct a study group both in Oxford and in New York City, US where there will be an International symposium of Ibn 'Arabi Society in October 2017.

Literature review

Document archives and recordkeeping in general have been an important activity from the time when human invented writing but the study of archives as an academic discipline is a recent occurrence. The internet has enabled people carry out research and meanwhile it encouraged institutions to digitise their collections to allow for more accessibility on one hand, and to protect historical heritage on another. Digitisations enabled new concepts to flourish such as digital libraries and digital archives – of which are becoming a popular phenomenon in the 21st century worldwide.

In his manual of archival administration Sir Hilary Jenkinson (1922) stated that the primary duty of archivists or curator is to the actual record and the secondary duty would go on accessibility and usability of these records by individual scholars; thus by serving the digital records the archive serves the users. The scholarly community in particular and users of materials like manuscripts and other valuable source of knowledge expect that these materials be made available through the internet on a cloud computing technology (Duranti, 2015). The British Library for instance has an interesting catalogues and archives that contain large number of valuable collection including digitised manuscripts.

As a consequence of the digital technology, the study of archives increased exponentially in the past 50 years making it an independent academic discipline according to (Valderhaug) and since 1980s the archival community has witnessed a professional development. So archives in modern time has become a science with its own theories and practices worthy to be studied. For instance, in the UK, academic institutions like UCL have constructed postgraduate courses for the learning of archive and record management (physical & digital).

Besides institutions, several organisations have formulated international frameworks and standards, such as the International Standard Archival Description (general) or ISAD(G), Society of American Archivists (SAA) and the International Organisation for Standardisation ISO, the International Council on Archives (ICA), with the ICA marking the creation of a distinct professional community states (Shepherd, *Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England*, 2009, p. 8); formed at the UNESCO in 1948 and is dedicated to the effective management of records. ICA has published several codes and principles for archives and records best practice.

The Web 2.0 and the development of information science in the last 10 years have made its impact on how people access information resources and transformed the ways they do research; and as a consequence, many physical archives, libraries and museums have taken the initiatives to digitise their collections. These collections varies from historic manuscripts, papers and other materials, making them accessible via online catalogues.

This unprecedented step of digitisation has allowed individual scholars and people at large to access valuable materials that were, in the past, preserved in secure vaults and accessed by special request and permission. Digital archives have allowed a steady progression of specialist societies such as ibn 'Arabi's to present their collections in digital image.

The digital archive has more advantage in the sense it can be accessed remotely by researchers; and provide a readily accessible copy to the original, considering that the original maybe located in a distant library or museum (Crockett, 2016, p. 160). Although the digital image can never replace the original; but digitisation certainly benefited scholarship.

Today the term 'archive' is used to refer to objects other than what we know as documents (Brown, 2014, 10). So a document is an object of some sort that conveys information, and therefore it can be anything collected by archives, libraries, and museums (Manoff, 2004). These changes of perceptions and concepts of what constitutes a 'document' is in fact transformations in archival theories (Duranti, *The Concepts of Appraisal and Archival Theory*, 1994); and new formulations of old concepts (Cook, 2001).

Numerous theories have been devised in relation to archive and especially more than before since the advent of the internet, opening more doors for empirical studies.

With the emergence of the information society and digital scholarship has made digital records and archives increasingly more important and this has encouraged more historical societies to digitise their repositories. Research shows that more and more individual and academic scholars do research through electronic documents.

The transformations in societies and how people do research or deal with documents from hard engineering-like approach to the born-digital softer. Records managers and archivists are aware of these transformations and have taken user-centered approach to address challenges and foresee possible opportunities (Foscarini, Understanding the Context of Records Creation and Use: 'hard' verses 'soft' approaches to records management, 2010).

The study of archives including digital archives is multidisciplinary. According to (Ketelaar, 2010) the co-founder of Archival Science journal, has stated that the journal has attracted more non-archivist authors because of digitisation of documents, which has become a ubiquitous activity. It is becoming clear that if documents are not digitised then it simply does not exist, at least from the user's perspective.

Methodology

The research method that has been identified suitable for this kind of project is qualitative analysis because the number of users are limited, especially active users of MIAS archive. I will carry out extensive literature review to identify principles of digital archives design and implementation. There are two more steps that I need to take, the first is to determine what digital archives to use for my comparative study purpose; one of which is the Royal Asiatic Society's online catalogue and archive.

In addition to the above, I will conduct interviews, as data collection technique, with several of Ibn 'Arabi Society's members; and the possibility to send questionnaires via emails to members of MIAS overseas. The questions asked via the online questionnaires or in person interviews are vital to the evaluation of archive project and will help me suggest new developments.

The possibility of informal questions or interviews with senior who have undertaken projects of this nature is anticipated, but not guaranteed depending on where the information in the literature review leads

The extensive literature review as well as the archival comparative study methods will provide a framework for developing some hypotheses. The comparative study will help articulate some hypotheses since it has been suggested that reasoning by analogy is an excellent source of hypotheses (Connaway & Radford, 2017).

Work plan

I will be taking down important points from literature reviews as well as the conducted comparative study as I progress in my project. It is also important to identify issues, if any, with the current online Ibn 'Arabi Society archive and will keep notes of such issues as I go along.

May 2007

- non-extensive literature review to identify scope and definitions
- submitting the research proposal by 12/05/2017

June/July

- Further research and literature review
- studying the Ibn 'Arabi Archive project
- Identifying two more similar digital archives/associations to do comparative study
- To email these associations to seek possible interviews in September

August

- Arrange interviews with Ibn 'Arabi Society members
- Interviewing academic scholars as well as postgraduate students who use the archive IA archive

September

- conduct interviews with archivists that were contacted in June/July
- transcribing interviews and analysing content

October

- Analysis of qualitative data

November

- Final writing up process

December

- Final writing up process
- Proof reading

5 January 2018

- Submission

Resources

Part of the project will be desk-based, conducting literature reviews making use of Web of Science to identify most relevant resources for both archival theory and practice. Currently I have almost full access to the current on-line archive but during the weeks ahead I may request to access some advanced features. There will be the need to visit Oxford City to meet up with members of Ibn 'Arabi where the Society is located to conduct interviews and meet the information technology expert who designed the current online archive. Other interviews will be conducted with academic scholars who currently use the digital archive; and some of these users are PhD research students. A recording device will be needed to record the dialogue with the targeted interviewees.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Ethics are important to all research that involves social and behavioural studies. The purpose and scope of the project will be fully explained to all the interviewed participants in order for them to understand, and be aware of, what they are participating in. Additionally, the data that is gathered will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of the project. Since I will conduct interviews, forms such as consent forms will be attached at a later stage and according to the work plan – this will be determined with my supervisor since I don't know the details yet. As Pickard (2013, p. 92) pointed out, there is a distinction between anonymity and confidentiality and this must be explained to participants.

Part A: Ethics Checklist

If your answer to any of the following questions (1 – 3) is YES, you must apply to an appropriate external ethics committee for approval:		Delete as appropriate
1.	Does your project require approval from the National Research Ethics Service (NRES)? (E.g. because you are recruiting current NHS patients or staff? If you are unsure, please check at http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/)	No
2.	Will you recruit any participants who fall under the auspices of the Mental Capacity Act? (Such research needs to be approved by an external ethics committee such as NRES or the Social Care Research Ethics Committee http://www.scie.org.uk/research/ethics-committee/)	No
3.	Will you recruit any participants who are currently under the auspices of the Criminal Justice System, for example, but not limited to, people on remand, prisoners and those on probation? (Such research needs to be authorised by the ethics approval system of the National Offender Management Service.)	No

If your answer to any of the following questions (4 – 11) is YES, you must apply to the Senate Research Ethics Committee for approval (unless you are applying to an external ethics committee):		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
4.	Does your project involve participants who are unable to give informed consent, for example, but not limited to, people who may have a degree of learning disability or mental health problem, that means they are unable to make an informed decision on their own behalf?	No
5.	Is there a risk that your project might lead to disclosures from participants concerning their involvement in illegal activities?	No
6.	Is there a risk that obscene and or illegal material may need to be accessed for your project (including online content and other material)?	No
7.	Does your project involve participants disclosing information about sensitive subjects?	No
8.	Does your project involve you travelling to another country outside of the UK, where the Foreign & Commonwealth Office has issued a travel warning? (http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/)	No
9.	Does your project involve invasive or intrusive procedures? For example, these may include, but are not limited to, electrical stimulation, heat, cold or bruising.	No
10.	Does your project involve animals?	No
11.	Does your project involve the administration of drugs, placebos or other substances to study participants?	No

If your answer to any of the following questions (12 – 18) is YES, you should consult your supervisor, as you may need to apply to an ethics committee for approval.		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
12.	Does your project involve participants who are under the age of 18?	No
13.	Does your project involve adults who are vulnerable because of their social, psychological or medical circumstances (vulnerable adults)? This includes adults with cognitive and / or learning disabilities, adults with physical disabilities and older people.	No
14.	Does your project involve participants who are recruited because they are staff or students of City University London? For example, students studying on a particular course or module. (If yes, approval is also	No

	required from the Project Tutor.)	
15.	Does your project involve intentional deception of participants?	No
16.	Does your project involve identifiable participants taking part without their informed consent?	No
17.	Does your project pose a risk to participants or other individuals greater than that in normal working life?	No
18.	Does your project pose a risk to you, the researcher, greater than that in normal working life?	No

If your answer to the following question (19) is YES and your answer to all questions 1 – 18 is NO, you must complete part B of this form.

19.	Does your project involve human participants? For example, as interviewees, respondents to a questionnaire or participants in evaluation or testing.	Yes
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Part B: Ethics Proportionate Review Form

If you answered YES to question 19 and NO to all questions 1 – 18, you may use this part of the form to submit an application for a proportionate ethics review of your project. Your dissertation project supervisor will review and approve this application.

The following questions (20 – 24) must be answered fully.		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
20.	Will you ensure that participants taking part in your project are fully informed about the purpose of the research?	Yes
21.	Will you ensure that participants taking part in your project are fully informed about the procedures affecting them or affecting any information collected about them, including information about how the data will be used, to whom it will be disclosed, and how long it will be kept?	Yes
22.	When people agree to participate in your project, will it be made clear to them that they may withdraw (i.e. not participate) at any time without any penalty?	Yes
23.	Will consent be obtained from the participants in your project, if necessary? Consent from participants will only be necessary if you plan to gather personal data. "Personal data" means data relating to an identifiable living person, e.g. data you collect using questionnaires, observations,	Yes

	<p>interviews, computer logs. The person might be identifiable if you record their name, username, student id, DNA, fingerprint, etc.</p> <p><i>If YES, attach the participant information sheet(s) and consent request form(s) that you will use. You must retain these for subsequent inspection. Failure to provide the filled consent request forms will automatically result in withdrawal of any earlier ethical approval of your project.</i></p>	
24.	<p>Have you made arrangements to ensure that material and/or private information obtained from or about the participating individuals will remain confidential?</p> <p>Provide details:</p> <p>Arrangement will be done prior to the interviews.</p>	No

If the answer to the following question (25) is YES, you must provide details		Delete as appropriate
25.	<p>Will the research involving participants be conducted in the participant's home or other non-University location?</p> <p><i>If YES, provide details of how your safety will be ensured:</i></p>	No

Attachments (these must be provided if applicable):	Delete as appropriate
Participant information sheet(s)	Yes
Consent form(s)	Yes
Questionnaire(s)**	Yes
Topic guide(s) for interviews and focus groups**	Yes
Permission from external organisations (e.g. for recruitment of participants)**	Not applicable

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Appendix [3] - Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Student: Ziyad Wanis, City University of London



Title of study: MIAS Library Catalogue: evaluating the digital archive project

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

I am undertaking this study to evaluate the current on-line archive project of Ibn 'Arabi Society based in Oxford, England <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/archive.html>, which forms my master's dissertation in Information Science at City, University of London. The aim of the study is to gain a comprehensive overview of the digital archive project carried out by the MIAS in 2012 until 2016 and its usability among members and academic scholars worldwide by comparing it with some other online archives.

To compare the effectiveness of the concerned archive with other digital archives that provides similar service as MIAS and understanding participants' experiences and perspectives via this interview. The interview questions are well-formulated after extensive literature review.

The study will include literature review, survey questionnaires, semi-structured interview stage, analysis and description of the findings, and the write up, and will be submitted on the 5th of January 2018.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you make use of digitised special collection materials like monographs, manuscripts etc. The total number of participants in the interview process will be between 5 and 20.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation will be a huge benefit for my research; participation in the project is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in part or all. You can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If appropriate, include that that once the data has been anonymised/published participants will no longer be able to withdraw their data.

If you are a student, participation will not affect your grades or course. And if you are a member of MIAS society will not affect your membership or reputation since personal data will be anonymised.

What will happen if I take part?

When we meet, I will briefly explain the background of MIAS society and its archive project, and the aim and objectives of the study. Then will ask you about your occupation and your research/professional background. The interview will take the form of an in-person semi-structured interview will take 30 to 45 minutes in duration. The interview will take place in your office, or any meeting room within your institution. I will send you the interview questions a few days before the actual appointment. Since the participation is voluntary, and although I prefer the interview to happen in-person, but you can answer the interview questions by email.

I will be recording our conversation using a voice recorder, and will transcribe the recording and send the transcript to you for review and approval. During the interview I will ask you to navigate through MIAS online archive and state your professional opinion and satisfaction. This process in particular will not be recorded, but I will only take observational handwritten notes. You will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview.

What do I have to do?

I am expecting from participants such as yourself, to give honest answers to my questions; but you do not need to share any details that you do not prefer to disclose.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Given the small size of the digital archives and archival catalogues that are curated by archival institutions or organisations such as yours, your identity may be easily guessable through the information that will be provided in my analysis and description. I will try to minimise this risk by excluding personal details.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The potential benefits of your participation in the interview will highlight areas that you are not aware of, especially with relation to the effectiveness and usability of digital archives. Will provide you with a background of MIAS society and its digital archive. Your participation will be helping us to improve the resources, and accessibility to these resources and future benefits to the wider research community of historical archives. The Information obtained through your participation as well as the literature review will feed into important recommendations on digital archives and accessibility of collections with a possible article or a final report as a reflection and personal experience acquired from this research.

What will happen when the research study stops?

Once the dissertation is approved, I will destroy the recordings and any related data.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

No third party will have access to the transcribed information or the actual recording, except some extracts that I may need to share with my dissertation supervisor or with my colleagues, but no personal details will be included. The completed dissertation may be deposited into City University of London dissertation repository. There will be no personal

data in the dissertation and all recording will be destroyed upon the approval of my dissertation.

What will happen to results of the research study?

After the submission and approval of my dissertation by City, University of London, the findings and prospective recommendations may be published in form of an article in the MIAS journal (Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society); but anonymity will be maintained, and a copy of the article will be sent to participants by email. This will happen soon after the approval, around the month of February or March 2018.

What will happen if I do not want to carry on with the study?

The participant is free to withdraw from the study without an explanation or penalty at any time provided that your decision is done up until the study ends in December 2017, but you need to provide an explanation for your withdrawal.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you should ask to speak to a member of the research team. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through City's complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: **MIAS Library Catalogue: evaluating the digital archive project**

You could also write to the Secretary at:
Anna Ramberg
Research Governance & Integrity Manager
Research & Enterprise
City, University of London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email: Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

City holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Further information and contact details

Researcher (myself): Ziyad Wanis - @ z.a.wanis@city.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor David Bawden - @ d.bawden@city.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix [4] - Consent Form

Title of Study: **Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) Library Catalogue: Evaluating the Society's Online Archive Project**

Please initial box

1.	<p>I confirm that I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.</p> <p>I understand this will involve :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be interviewed by the researcher • allow the interview to be audiotaped • make myself available for a further interview should that be required 	
2.	<p>This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):</p> <p><i>This study is to evaluate the current on-line archive project of Ibn 'Arabi Society based in Oxford, England – available at: http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/archive.html, which forms my master's dissertation in Information Science at City, University of London. The data gathered will be analysed and described within the dissertation before submission to the University LIS department on the 5th of January 2018.</i></p> <p>I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write-up of the research.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>I understand that I have given approval for my name and/or the name of my society, and/or the name of my workplace to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>I understand that I have only given approval for my job title and the name of my workplace to be used in the final report of the project, and future publications.</p>	
3.	I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.	
4.	I agree to City, University of London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on City complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.	
5.	I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publication.	
6.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant Signature Date


Name of Researcher Signature Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

Appendix [5] - A Snapshot of the Survey Announcement

You're receiving this message because you are a member of the Ibn 'Arabi Society.
Remove yourself from this mailing list? [Unsubscribe](#). Having trouble viewing this email? [View it in your browser](#).

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society



August 2017

Dear Member or Fellow,

The publicly accessible catalogue of the MIAS digital archive of Ibn 'Arabi manuscripts has been available on the Society's website for two or three years.

You can see a link to this catalogue on
www.ibnarabisociety.org/archive.html

Ziyad Wanis, an MA student under the Department of Library & Information Science (LIS) at City University of London, has prepared a questionnaire enquiring about user experience of this online catalogue, and if you have used it, it would be helpful if you would share your findings.

This research aims to evaluate the impact of the current Ibn 'Arabi online archival catalogue on users. It will help us understand the efficiency and effectiveness of the archive and the dimensions of usability among individual scholars and research students.

This questionnaire will contribute towards recommendations to improve areas of the archival catalogue and ways to integrate the actual archive of manuscripts with other contemporary resources of the MIAS within the online archival catalogue. This survey questionnaire will take approximately 5 -7 minutes to complete.


Apart from the public online catalogue, there is a more detailed database primarily used by scholars, which requires a password for access. If you have not used this catalogue before, but would like to, you can contact the [Librarian](#) for access details.

This is a link to the questionnaire, which is a Google form:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSekASSNcV-xLhcJc7IxdVUy9pLtzdJlap_kWNzFKuLtPIInTA/viewform

Best wishes
Martin Notcutt

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, P.O. Box 892, Oxford OX2 7XL, United Kingdom
Tel: (01865) 511963, E-mail: mias.uk@ibnarabisociety.org

[Catalogue of Ibn 'Arabi's Works](#)
A version of the catalogue of works and manuscripts is now available to view on-line.



Supported by a grant
from The Islamic
Manuscript Association.

Appendix [6] - The Online Questionnaire

QUESTIONS

RESPONSES

20

Section 1 of 7

Title of Study: MIAS Library Catalogue: evaluating the digital archive project

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) On-line Archive Project

This research aims to evaluate the impact of the current Ibn 'Arabi online archival catalogue on users. It will help us understand the efficiency and effectiveness of the archive and the dimensions of usability among individual scholars and research students.

Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society (MIAS) On-line Archive Project

Link to the archive:
<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/archive.html>

This questionnaire will contribute towards recommendations to improve areas of the archival catalogue and ways to integrate the actual archive of manuscripts with other contemporary resources of the MIAS within the online archival catalogue.

The research is being carried out by Ziyad Wanis, under the Department of Library & Information Science (LIS) at City University of London.

This survey questionnaire will take approximately 5 -7 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation.


- an email of the survey will be sent to the email that you will provide below.

Email address *

Valid email address


This form is collecting email addresses. [Change settings](#)

City UoL logo



CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

MIAS logo



Consent form

Consent to the use of Data

I understand that Ziyad Wanis is collecting data in the form of on-line survey questionnaire for the use in an academic research project previously described. I therefore give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymous.
- The data will be treated as confidential.
- The data may be used in future publications, both print and on-line.
- The data will be destroyed once the study is complete.

I know that I can, at any point, withdraw my responses or ask any questions via email: z.a.wanis@city.ac.uk.

Points of contact:

Researcher's name: Ziyad Wanis, z.a.wanis@city.ac.uk

Supervisor's name : Professor David Bawden, d.bawden@city.ac.uk

Department address: Library and Information Science, 1 Northampton Square, City University of London, London, EC1V 0HB.

I agree with the above consent form and I am happy to continue with the survey *

☐ I agree

NEXT

Page 1 of 7

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Section 2 of 7



Your relationship with the Ibn 'Arabi Society

This section will consist of some questions in relation to the MIAS society

Are you a current member of MIAS Society? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other...

Are you aware of Ibn 'Arabi digital archive project? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please specify which of the below categories would you most identify with? *

- ☐ Academic research student
- ☐ Independent scholar
- ☐ University lecturer
- ☐ Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies
- ☐ Other...

The Digitisation of Ibn 'Arabi's Manuscripts

MIAS archive project has been collecting digital copies of the best historic manuscripts of Ibn 'Arabi's works, many of them dating to Ibn 'Arabi's lifetime and immediate circle of students. A Digital archive is an online place where documents such as the valuable manuscripts of Ibn 'Arabi and other materials of public or historical interest are preserved.

Please answer all the following questions:

⋮

Have you navigated through the MIAS on-line archive before? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other...

What does MIAS's archive digitisation project mean to you? *

Short answer text

Are you an archivist or digitisation professional working within the field of humanities? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other...

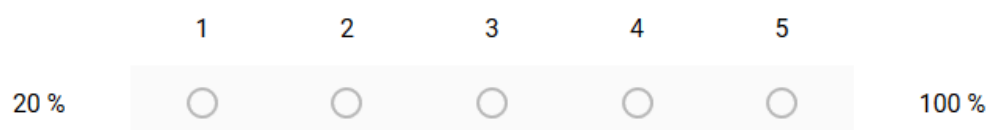
MIAS Online Archive Effectiveness and Usability

This section covers your satisfaction of the use of the current online interface.

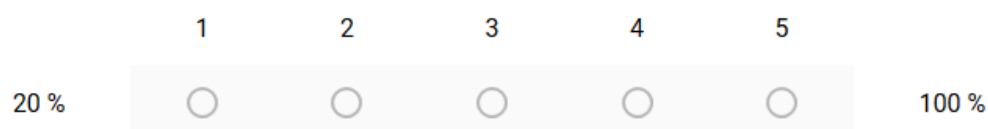
In your opinion, what should be done to improve users' capability to source information from MIAS online archive?

Long answer text

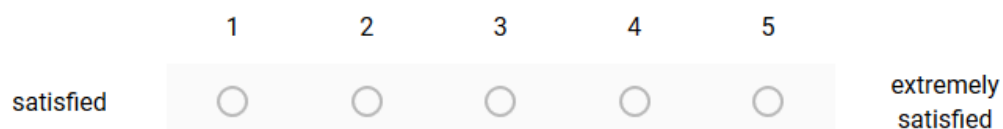
How effective is the current user interface? (quality meaning of results)



How efficient is the current user interface? (how quick is the result) *



How satisfied are you with the user interface?



How impressive is the visual layout? *



MIAS Digital Archival Catalogue Records

This section has some questions that are related to the actual content of the archival catalogue and what else you would like to see available on the archival catalogue. Each manuscript is a digitised version of the originals which were carefully selected using a pre-set criteria devised by the curator's team of Ibn 'Arabi society.

What is your perception of the manuscript's predefined description elements? ^{*}
(i.e. title, date(s), appraisal, usage rights, etc)

Long answer text

What else would you like to see in the digital archival catalogue?

Long answer text

How collaborative is the librarian in answering your information needs?

Short answer text

Finally...

Details about your knowledge and experience with other digital archives out there that provide the same service as MIAS society.

...

If you know of any digital archives that you are impressed with in regards to its interface design and content, please name these organisations below:

Short answer text

.....

Do you have any further comments you wish to add?

Long answer text

.....

Are you happy to be contacted to follow up with your answers? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other...

Personal Details

Your personal details will only be used for contact purposes and will not be mentioned within the study.

Firstname:

Short answer text

Surname:

Short answer text

Thank you for your participation !

Description (optional)

Appendix [7] – Data from online questionnaire

Timestamp	Username	Please specify which of the below categories would you most identify with?	Have you navigated through the MIA's online archive before?	What does MIA's archive digitisation project mean to you?	Are you an archivist or digitisation professional working within the field of humanities?	In your opinion, what should be done to improve users' capability to source information from MIA's online archive?	How effective is the current user interface? (quality meaning of results)	How efficient is the current user interface? (how quick is the result)	How satisfied are you with the user interface?	How impressive is the visual layout?	What is your perception of the manuscript's predefined description elements? (i.e. title, date(s), appraisal, usage rights, etc)	What else would you like to see in the digital archival catalogue?	How collaborative is the librarian in answering your information needs?	If you know of any digital archives that you are impressed with in regards to its interface design and content, please name these organisations below.	Do you have any further comments you wish to add?	Are you happy to be contacted to follow up with your answers?	Firstname	Surname	
				The identification, digital preservation and cataloging of vital historic manuscripts to support preparation of critical editions and translations. It is a much-needed project and I have supported it. However I am not an Arabic speaker so seldom use it.	No			4	3	4	3	Practical, good	Sample pages of the manuscripts	Helpful	No knowledge	No	Yes		
2023/08/09 11:34:57 AM GMT		Personal study	Yes		No														
2023/08/10 1:19:42 PM GMT		Long-time student of Ibn Arabi	No		No	Use letters of the alphabet as links to title words to quickly find works	4	4	5	4	Not competent to answer	Nothing	Not tried				Yes		
2023/08/12 9:45:58 PM GMT		Academic research student	Yes	Unvaluable resource	No	Incipit / Explicit of the Mss.	4	4	4	2	Sufficient	Incipit / Except of the Mss. 84 Pictures	Very good	Al-Kindi catalogue of the IDEO		Yes			
2023/08/14 10:15:23 AM GMT		Independent scholar	Yes	A very useful resource indeed.	Yes	No suggestions. It seems to work well.	5	4	5	4	Good	Pictures of pages	Very collaborative			No			
2023/08/15 6:26:56 AM GMT		interesado independiente	No	Buscar los valores Ibn Arabi para plicarlos en la actualidad	No	Darle más difusión		1	1	1	No lo se	No lo se	No lo se	No	No	Yes			
				Getting authentic and updated information about the manuscript, reading or getting digital copies of some of them.	No	As I mentioned, I have not use the online archive recently, so I am unable to answer the rest of the questions in this page. (I will select "3" just to move the following page.)													
2023/08/17 11:04:39 AM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	No		No		3	3	3	3	Published/Unpublished, Interactive (people could contribute by adding notes about the manuscripts)	A physical archival catalogue in a building design specifically for this or at least a corner of a library dedicated for this in the UK	Very collaborative	HathTrust Digital Library (Share descriptive comments on the manuscripts) and https://www.kfu.edu.sa/en/Deans/Library/Agents/Manuscripts.aspx	Good luck with this noble project which deserve to be supported.	Yes			
				With limited digital access it carries little relevancy	No	Better online connections in rural Portugal	1	1	1	1	I have no perception, especially when previously required questions have no answers. If having never accessed, how do you gauge a % amount.				Remarkable devotion and not only to 'future generations'.	Not necessary in my case - a bit off the radar!			
2023/08/19 1:13:18 PM GMT		none of the above	No		No														
2023/08/20 3:15:20 PM GMT		University lecturer	Yes	An essential tool for my research	No	If possible, upload the manuscripts themselves. If not, perhaps links that will enable the user (if a member of MIA's) to request the relevant manuscript.	5	5	5	4	Very good.	As I stated above - the manuscripts themselves... or otherwise an option to request a copy of them.	Very		I think the effort and work of the people involved in the project are simply amazing and commendable!	Yes			
2023/08/24 6:25:32 AM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	Yes	Everything	No		3	3	3	3	There is enough room for improvement	sample images especially notes of samaa and ijaazat for each and every manuscript				Yes			
2023/08/02 9:23:28 PM GMT		Independent scholar	Yes	An opportunity to find reliable manuscripts not easily accessible elsewhere	No	To post one sample page of each manuscript	3	5	3	4	Very clear	If possible, a sample page of the manuscripts	Very collaborative	I do not know other digital archives out there that provide the same service as MIA's society	None	Yes			
2023/09/03 4:39:11 AM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	Yes	It is the most comprehensive archive of works by any pre-modern Muslim author	No		5	5	5	5	It is all very easy to use and logically organized	I cannot think of anything. It is excellent in its current form, in every way.	Very useful in answering all queries and even in making mss. available upon request	There is one, on post-Avicennian Islamic texts, run by Robert Wisnovsky (McGill). It is worth having a look at, though its aims and overall layout, etc. are very different.		No			
				la preservation et la sauvegarde des écrits du shaykh al-akbar	No		3	4	3	4	bien mais pas suffisamment mis à jour	les éditions récentes sont souvent omises	variable		suffisamment d'informations "actuelles"; par exemple, il faudrait notifier les recherches en cours des scholars sur tel ou tel crit ce qui viendrait que 3 scholars travaillent sur une dition critique d'un texte en même temps (!!!); chaque fois que la MIA's est informée d'un qu'un scholar travaille sur l'ADdition d'un texte d'IA, cela doit être notifié dans le RG correspondant mais aussi dans la page d'accueil dans "recent post"; il faudrait inciter davantage les scholars à participer à la mise à jour du RG (leur envoyer, à chacun, un mail pour leur demander de notifier sur archive project les informations qu'ils ont sur la parution d'une ADdition, ou la question de l'attribution de tel ou tel à écrit); archive project doit être un travail collectif, beaucoup reste à faire dans ce domaine; la page d'accueil devrait être repensée: dans "recent post" figure un lien, très à utile, pour les mss de la BN Paris sur l'IA, en accès à libre; il existe d'autres bibliothèques avec un accès à libre aux mss numérisés, l'escorial et d'autres, je pense qu'il faudrait faire la même chose. les compétences existent mais elles ne sont pas suffisamment utilisées! Des ADditions de travail à évaluer, les doivent être programmées entre les principaux	Yes			
2023/09/03 9:23:53 AM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	Yes		No														
2023/09/04 7:43:22 AM GMT		Independent scholar	No	MIA's is very important to have access of digital copies of the best manuscripts of Ibn 'Arabi's. The MIA's contains very important informations about Ibn Arabi's works.	No	I have no precise ideas about that, because I find the MIA's online archive very good.	4	4	4	5	Very good	the direct link between manuscripts of Ibn Arabi and the manuscripts of disciples' explanations if they exist.	very good	I have no information about	no	Yes			
2023/09/04 3:46:54 PM GMT		University lecturer	Yes	It is a great project that presents many advantages for scholars of IA. It preserves the legacy and offers a quick reference on the subject	No	it should be given the possibility of comparing more results	4	4	3	3	quite essential but useful	some relevant codicological details of the mss	Very collaborative	no suggestions sorry	Thanks for your excellent work	No			
2023/09/11 9:41:33 PM GMT		Independent scholar	Yes	Better accessibility to manuscripts	No		4	4	4	3	Some fields require checking and precision		Very collaborative, open to suggestions and corrections			No			
2023/09/29 3:29:42 AM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	No	major improvement over previous Turkish archives	No	fine as is		2	3	2	fine as is	fine as is	always very helpful			No			
2023/10/13 4:51:08 PM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	No	potential for research	No	Have not used it. Sorry. Choices below are meaningless.	5	5	5	5	n/a	do not know	n/a			not immediately			
				Getting authentic and updated information about the manuscript, reading or getting digital copies of some of them.	No	As I mentioned, I have not use the online archive recently, so I am unable to answer the rest of the questions in this page. (I will select "3" just to move the following page.)													
2023/10/15 7:42:06 PM GMT		Expert in Ibn 'Arabi's studies	Yes	Better access to research on Ibn 'Arabi and his interpreters for specialists, teachers, and students.	No	It would be helpful to also provide PDF copies of the articles for research purposes.	4	4	4	4	5	Clear and accessible.	These are all adequate and clear, however not demonstrated sufficiently to know which manuscript is which.	N.A.	academia.edu; Encyclopaedia Iranica; corpus.quran.com; historyofphilosophy.net	Thank you for your work!	Yes		
2023/10/25 3:42:49 PM GMT		work in NHS	Yes	EASIER ACCESS TO ONLINE MATERIAL RE: SUFIISM AND IBN ARABI PHILOSOPHY	No		4	4	3	3	More English translations of arabic text and details in English	Very collaborative	None	No	Yes				

Appendix [8] – the libraries visited by the MIAS team

Libraries visited Ibn ‘Arabi Society team

- Beyazıt Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
- Bodleian Library, Oxford
- Bölge Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Konya
- Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
- İnebey Kütüphanesi, Bursa
- İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
- Köprülü Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
- Koyunoğlu Müzesi ve Kütüphanesi, Konya
- Manisa İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Manisa
- Milli Kütüphanesi, Ankara
- Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
- Selim Ağa Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
- Staatsbibliothek, Berlin
- Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul
- Enderûn (Ahmed III) Kütüphanesi, Topkapı Palace, İstanbul
- Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, İstanbul
- Yusuf Ağa Kütüphanesi, Konya
- Libraries from which digital copies viewed
- Amasya Beyazıt İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Amasya
- Çorum İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Çorum
- Diyarbakır İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Diyarbakır
- Kastamonu İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Kastamonu
- Kayseri İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Kayseri
- Vahid Paşa İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Kütahya